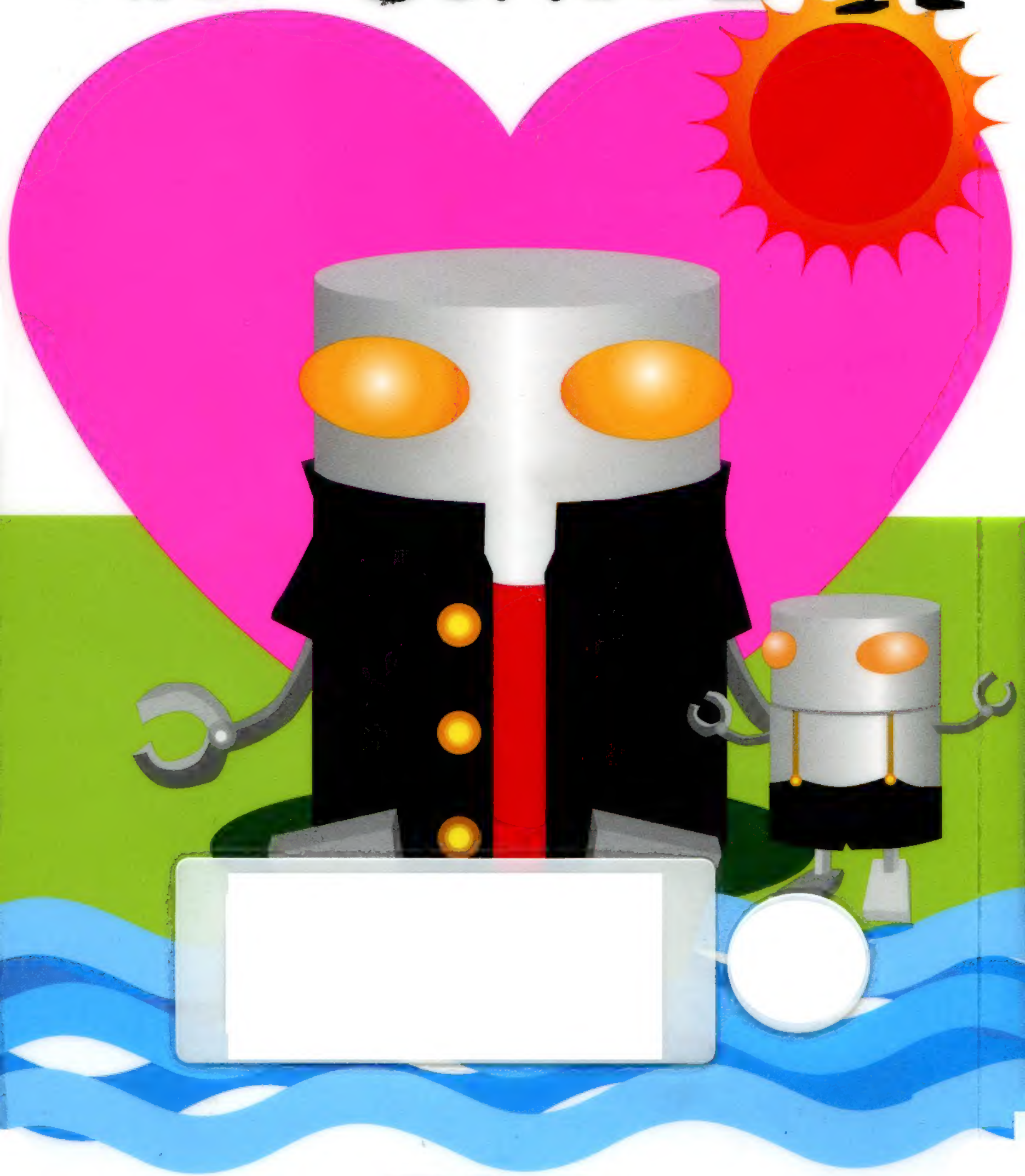
CROMARTIE HIGH SCHOOL

VOL.11



Eiji Nonaka

CROMARTIE HIGH SCHOOL

WINNER OF THE Kodansha Manga Award

This is a very special edition of Cromartie High School.

Sure, you could judge it by the two robots and the recurring pink heart motif on the cover, but then you'd be missing out on all the fear and intrigue this volume has to offer. Things like shadowy teachers, the inner workings of mechanical pencils, and a gorilla going-away party.

Come on—what other manga could possibly have a gorilla getting its own going-away party?!

So if you're weighing the merits of this volume over, say, a manga about the exploits of a young ninja doing ninja-like things, we humbly suggest that this is the manga you should be taking to the register. But don't take our word for it:

"This is a funny comic book."

— *The Comics Reporter*

Indeed.

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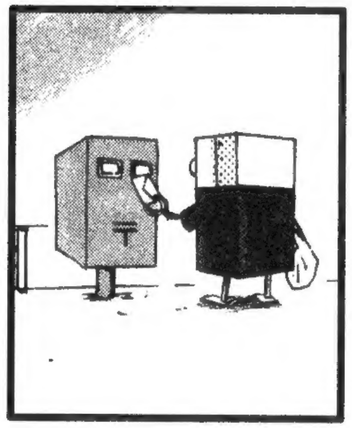
VALIANTLY FORGING AHEAD!
CROMARTIE HIGH SCHOOL 11
"THE GROWING
TOWARD TOMORROW
STORY."
EIJI NONAKA

CHAPTER 219: **BOYS GONE BAD**



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. . . . . .

EVER SINCE I WAS A KID, I'VE THOUGHT YOU HAD TO PUT THE LEAD IN HERE AT THE BOTTOM.

YOU PUT THE LEAD IN THROUGH THIS HOLE AT THE TOP, RIGHT?

YEAH.

YOU SEE THIS MECHANICAL PENCIL?

I ONLY FOUND OUT **YESTERDAY** THAT YOU CAN PUT THE LEAD IN AT THE TOP, GIVE IT A CLICK OR TWO AND YOU'LL BE READY TO GO. I WAS SHOCKED! I HAD NO IDEA USING A MECHANICAL PENCIL COULD BE SO SIMPLE!

THAT'S WHAT I'VE THOUGHT... THAT'S WHAT I'VE DONE FOR OVER 30 YEARS.

CHK

THE LEAD COMES OUT HERE AT THE BOTTOM.

CHK

CHK

THEN, IF YOU GIVE IT A COUPLE CLICKS...

CHK

YEAH.

TRUE. OVER 30 YEARS, THOSE FEW SECONDS PROBABLY ADD UP TO A LOT OF TIME.

RIGHT?! THINK OF ALL THE TIME I'VE WASTED!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

YES, BUT HERE'S MY PROBLEM.

SOUNDS NORMAL ENOUGH SO FAR.

. . . . . .

SO IF YOU COULD GO BACK TO YOUR CHILDHOOD AND CHANGE SOMETHING, YOU'D RELEARN HOW TO PUT THE LEAD INTO MECHANICAL PENCILS?!

THAT'S EASY FOR YOU TO SAY! YOU AREN'T THE ONE WHO'S BLOWN THREE DECADES ON THIS!

STILL, THAT'S LIFE, ISN'T IT? WASTED TIME, WASTED EFFORT...

WHAT I MEAN IS...

SORRY, YOU LOST ME.

I DIDN'T KNOW ANY OF THIS TILL RECENTLY.

NO, YOU DIDN'T MAKE A MISTAKE. YOU WERE RIGHT.

THEY LOOK SORT OF ALIKE SO I THOUGHT THEY MIGHT BE RELATED, BUT THEIR LAST NAMES ARE DIFFERENT...

WHAT? THEY ARE?!

THEY **ARE** BROTHERS.

I SEE THAT NOW. THANKS.

ANYWAY, CHEER UP. IT'S REALLY NOT THAT IMPOR-TANT.

EXACTLY. OR RATHER, THERE SHOULD BE SEVERAL **OTHER** THINGS YOU'D WANT TO GO BACK AND CHANGE.

YOU'RE RIGHT. NO, OF COURSE I WOULDN'T DO THAT. JUST THINKING ABOUT GOING BACK AND HAVING TO LEARN THAT ALL OVER AGAIN GIVES ME THE CREEPS.

THIS IS BAD! VERY BAD!

ガラ

RATTLE

I SWEAR. PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER, MAN!

AH. WELL, I'M SORRY FOR THE INTRUSION.

REALLY?

ACTUALLY, I'VE MADE A MISTAKE LIKE THAT.

YOU THINK SO?

COME TO THINK OF IT, PEOPLE MAKE MISTAKES LIKE THIS ALL THE TIME. I'M SURE EVERYONE'S DONE IT AT LEAST ONCE OR TWICE.

THERE'S A GORILLA RUNNING WILD IN THE HALLWAY!

HM?

YOU KNOW CHARLIE SHEEN AND EMILIO ESTEVEZ, THE HOLLYWOOD ACTORS?

I'M EMBAR-RASSED TO ADMIT IT, BUT...

TELL US WHAT IT WAS.

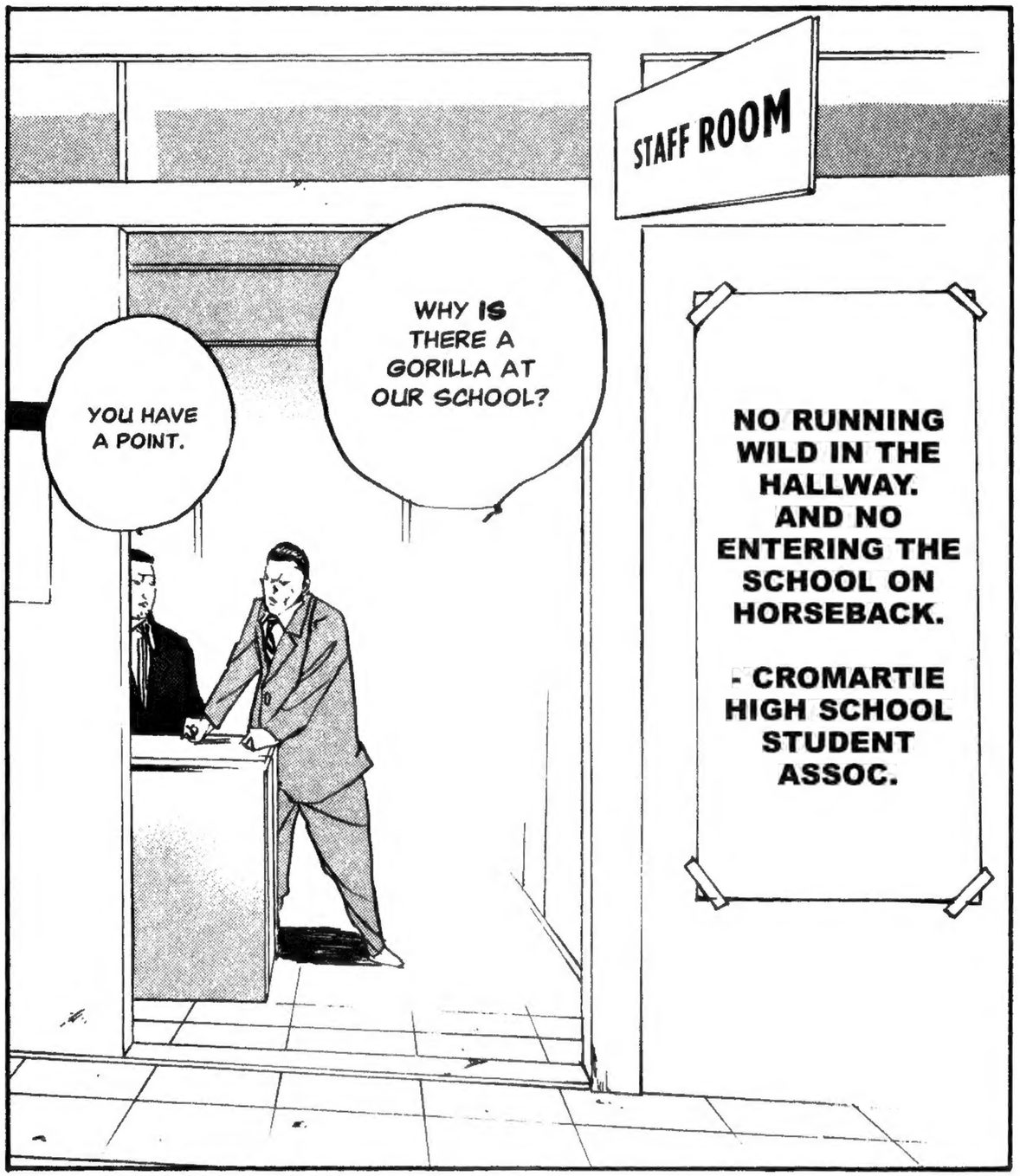
FOR THE LONGEST TIME, I THOUGHT THEY WERE BROTHERS.

WELL...

I GUESS. WHAT ABOUT THEM?

CHAPTER 220: **HOT FOR TEACHERS**

THERE'S JUST NO END TO THE PROBLEMS HERE, IS THERE?
. . . . . .
AH. WE WERE TALKING ABOUT CHARLIE SHEEN.
HM?
UH, WHAT WERE WE TALKING ABOUT AGAIN?
NO, NOT WHATEVER! WE MAY HAVE GOTTEN SIDETRACKED BY CHARLIE SHEEN, BUT WE WERE ORIGINALLY TALKING ABOUT MECHANICAL PENCILS! WE HAVE TO GET BACK TO THAT BEFORE WE CAN MOVE ON.
WHAT-EVER.
LIAR! WE WERE TALKING ABOUT MECHANICAL PENCILS!
THIS PLACE IS A SCHOOL, AT LEAST IN SOME SENSE OF THE WORD, AND WE'RE ITS TEACHERS. DON'T YOU THINK THAT ONCE IN A WHILE, WE SHOULD TRY TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING MORE **SCHOLASTIC**?
SORRY, DO YOU MIND?
ANYWAY, THE LEAD IN YOUR AVERAGE PENCIL IS--


STAFF ROOM
YOU HAVE A POINT.
WHY **IS** THERE A GORILLA AT OUR SCHOOL?
NO RUNNING WILD IN THE HALLWAY. AND NO ENTERING THE SCHOOL ON HORSEBACK.
- CROMARTIE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ASSOC.

WHOA, THEY'RE THE TEACHERS! (LOL)

THE NOISE THAT REALLY GETS ME IS THAT *SQUEAK! SQUEAK!* SOUND WHEN TWO BITS OF STYROFOAM RUB TOGETHER. I CAN'T STAND IT!

DEFINITELY. TRUST ME ON THIS.

ARE YOU ACTUALLY GOING TO SAY SOMETHING RELEVANT THIS TIME?

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A PRETTY FORCED CONVER-SATION.

I GUESS WE COULD TALK ABOUT THE CHALK-BOARDS.

YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE SCHOOL? TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I HAVEN'T GIVEN IT MUCH THOUGHT.

WE NEVER TALK ABOUT ANYTHING THAT MATTERS.

THIS IS THE KIND OF CONVER-SATION YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

THAT WAS A GREAT EXAMPLE. WELL DONE, KURAMOTO.

HUH. I WASN'T EXPECTING THAT, BUT I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.

YOU KNOW, I THINK I'LL PASS. THIS IS SOMETHING A KID IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WOULD TALK ABOUT.

UH...SOMETIMES WHEN YOU WRITE ON THE CHALKBOARD, THE CHALK MAKES A *LOUD SKREE!* SORT OF SOUND, DOESN'T IT? I HATE THAT.

FINE, I'LL GO FIRST.

IT'S MY TURN NOW, HUH?

WHAT ABOUT YOU, HASHIDA? WHAT'S YOUR SOUND?

SURE. PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT SOUNDS THAT DRIVE THEM CRAZY, RIGHT?

WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS TO THINK FROM THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE! IF YOU DID THAT, THE CONVERSATION WOULD FLOW NATURALLY.

SO WHAT? WE MAY BE TEACHERS, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE ALWAYS HAVE TO TALK ABOUT **CALCULUS** OR DIFFICULT THINGS LIKE THAT.

HUH?! WHY WASN'T MINE ANY GOOD?

NO.

THAT'S NOT QUITE RIGHT, IS IT?

I'D HAVE TO SAY...THE RUSTLING A COCKROACH MAKES WHEN IT WALKS OVER SOMETHING.

NOT YOU AGAIN.

ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT BOTHERSOME SOUNDS? I HAVE A STORY ABOUT THAT, TOO!

YOU BET. IT'S A SURE THING!

BUT WOULD ANYONE WANT TO TALK ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE **THIS**?

I SORT OF GET WHERE YOU'RE COMING FROM, BUT I'M STILL NOT CONVINCED.

CAN YOU SEE HOW YOURS IS DIFFERENT?

NOW DO YOU UNDER-STAND?

ONLY ONE OF THESE IS DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS.

HUH? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I'LL EXPLAIN USING ILLUS-TRATIONS.

FINE.

MR. HASHIDA, I HARDLY THINK "ALL SQUIGGLY WIGGLY" IS THE SORT OF THING A TEACHER SHOULD BE SAYING!

NO REAL REASON. JUST... IT'S THE ONLY ONE THAT'S ALL SQUIGGLY WIGGLY.

OK, WHY?

THIS ONE?

UH...

WHICH ONE?

BECAUSE...

HUH? WHY THAT ONE?

THIS ONE.

THEN WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

YOU JUST DON'T GET IT, DO YOU?

THEN I'LL EXPLAIN ONE MORE TIME.

I GUESS.

I'D SAY IT'S THE COCKROACH YOU HATE MORE THAN THE RUSTLING, WOULDN'T YOU?

HMM, HOW CAN I PUT THIS?

UH, OK.

THIS IS THE IMPORTANT PART, SO PAY ATTENTION!

BUT I DON'T HATE THE CHALK ITSELF.

MY SOUND IS THE *SKREE!* THAT A PIECE OF CHALK MAKES. I HATE IT.

NO, I'M NOT SAYING THAT AT ALL.

BUT MR. KURAMOTO, YOU'RE NOT SAYING YOU HATE STYROFOAM, ARE YOU?

KURAMOTO HERE HATES THE *SQUEAK! SQUEAK!* THAT STYROFOAM MAKES.

YEAH, OF COURSE.

BUT YOU ALSO HATE COCK-ROACHES, YES?

IN YOUR CASE, HASHIDA, YOU SAY YOU HATE THE RUSTLING SOUND THAT COCKROACHES MAKE...

HM.

THERE YOU HAVE IT.

I'M NOT CRAZY ABOUT IT OR ANYTHING, BUT...

CHAPTER 221: **CUT HERE**

HNNGH!
HNGH
WHAT IS IT? WHY ARE YOU, LIKE, EXERTIN' YOURSELF?
IT'S NO GOOD!
THIS THING WON'T OPEN!
SOY SAUCE
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE!
YEAH, BUT WHY?! LOOK AT ALL THESE JAGGED EDGES! THIS THING SHOULD OPEN RIGHT UP, BUT IT WON'T! I'M USIN' ALL MY STRENGTH, TOO!
A PACKET OF SOY SAUCE, HUH? THOSE THINGS CAN BE PRETTY TOUGH.

IT'S THE ONLY ONE YOU CAN'T DRAW WITHOUT LIFTING YOUR PENCIL.
HM.
THE SQUIG-GLY ONE, RIGHT?
WHICH OF THESE WOULD YOU SAY IS DIF-FERENT?
FINE, WE'LL ASK KURA-MOTO!
BUT I THINK THE SQUIGGLY WIGGLY EXPLA-NATION MAKES SENSE, TOO.
HUH. THAT MAKES SENSE.
IT'S THE ONLY ONE THAT'S A NUMBER.
HUH?! HOW COME?
THIS ONE.
OOPS. CLASS.
BRING キンコーン カンコーン
IT LOOKS LIKE A 4!
AH!

THOSE ARE SOME GREAT TEACHERS.

FEEL LIKE GIVING IT A SHOT?

SQK

EXACTLY. THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD GET THAT THING OPEN.

IF A PACKET HAD "OPENS FROM **NOWHERE** ON THIS END" ON IT, WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO OPEN IT?

JP

THAT'S SOME INTENSE MANUFAC-TURING.

YEAH, THAT'S PRETTY CRAZY.

Soy sauce packet with no jagged edges

THERE ARE SOME AWESOME PACKETS OUT THERE THESE DAYS. THEY DON'T HAVE ANY JAGGED EDGES AT ALL, BUT THEY SAY "OPEN THIS END" ON 'EM, AND THEY OPEN RIGHT UP!

. . . . . .

OPENS FROM ~~ANYWHERE~~ NOWHERE ON THIS END

HUH?

SHP

GET A HOLD OF YOURSELVES! WHAT HAS MANUFACTURING GOT TO DO WITH IT? YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT THIS WAY TOO HARD. IF YOU ASK ME, YOU'RE ALL BEIN' FOOLED.

HUH?

YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG.

GO AHEAD. OPEN IT.

HRM?

YOU DON'T GET IT, DO YOU? WHEN YOU SEE "OPEN FROM ANYWHERE ON THIS END" WRITTEN ON THERE, YOU COMPLETELY BUY INTO IT. YOU **BELIEVE** IT'LL OPEN, WHICH IS THE WHOLE REASON THAT IT DOES. YOUR AVERAGE HUMAN CAN BE A LOT STRONGER THAN YOU THINK WHEN HE PUTS HIS MIND TO IT.

IS THAT SO? THEN HOW COME THOSE PACKETS COME OPEN?

HNGH

HOLD ON, HAYASHIDA. SO YOU'RE SAYIN'...

. . . . . .

SOMEONE WHO CAN KEEP HIS POWER WITHOUT BEIN' AFFECTED BY NEW INFORMATION? WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU GONNA FIND SOMEONE LIKE THAT?!

WOULDN'T HE BE ABLE TO OPEN THE PACKET?

BUT IF SOMEONE WERE TO **NOT** BE SWAYED BY THIS INFORMATION, AND ABLE TO CALL UPON HIS NORMAL PHYSICAL STRENGTH...

TH-
THEN IT'S TRUE!

I CAN'T DO IT!

SO THAT'S WHAT YOU CAME UP WITH. GOOD JOB, KAMIYAMA.

TRUE. BUT I DON'T WANNA LOSE TO HAYA-SHIDA.

NOW WE AIN'T TALKIN' ABOUT HUMANS ANYMORE.

UH...

THE GORILLA, FOR EXAMPLE.

EVEN THE SMALLEST PRECONCEPTION IS ENOUGH TO SCREW US ALL UP. THAT'S JUST HOW HUMANS ARE...WHICH IS WHY WE BADASSES HAVE TO QUESTION ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING!

WHOA.

THAT'S HOW IT WORKS.

ANYWAY, WITH ALL THAT POWER, THE GORILLA WILL HAVE NO PROBLEM OPENING UP A PACKET OF SOY SAUCE, RIGHT?

I'M NOT SO SURE WHAT THIS IS SUPPOSED TO PROVE ANYMORE...

YEAH. HE'S PERFECT!

THE GORILLA CAN READ NOTHING OF OPENINGS OR ENDS. THERE IS NO BETTER CANDIDATE!

DON'T YOU THINK IT'S A LITTLE EARLY TO BE ADMITTING DEFEAT?

NOT SO FAST.

YEAH. HE'S GOT US BEAT...

HE'S RIGHT FOR ONCE.

TWITCH

HNGH

THIS IS GONNA BE GOOD. OK, GORILLA, OPEN THAT THING!

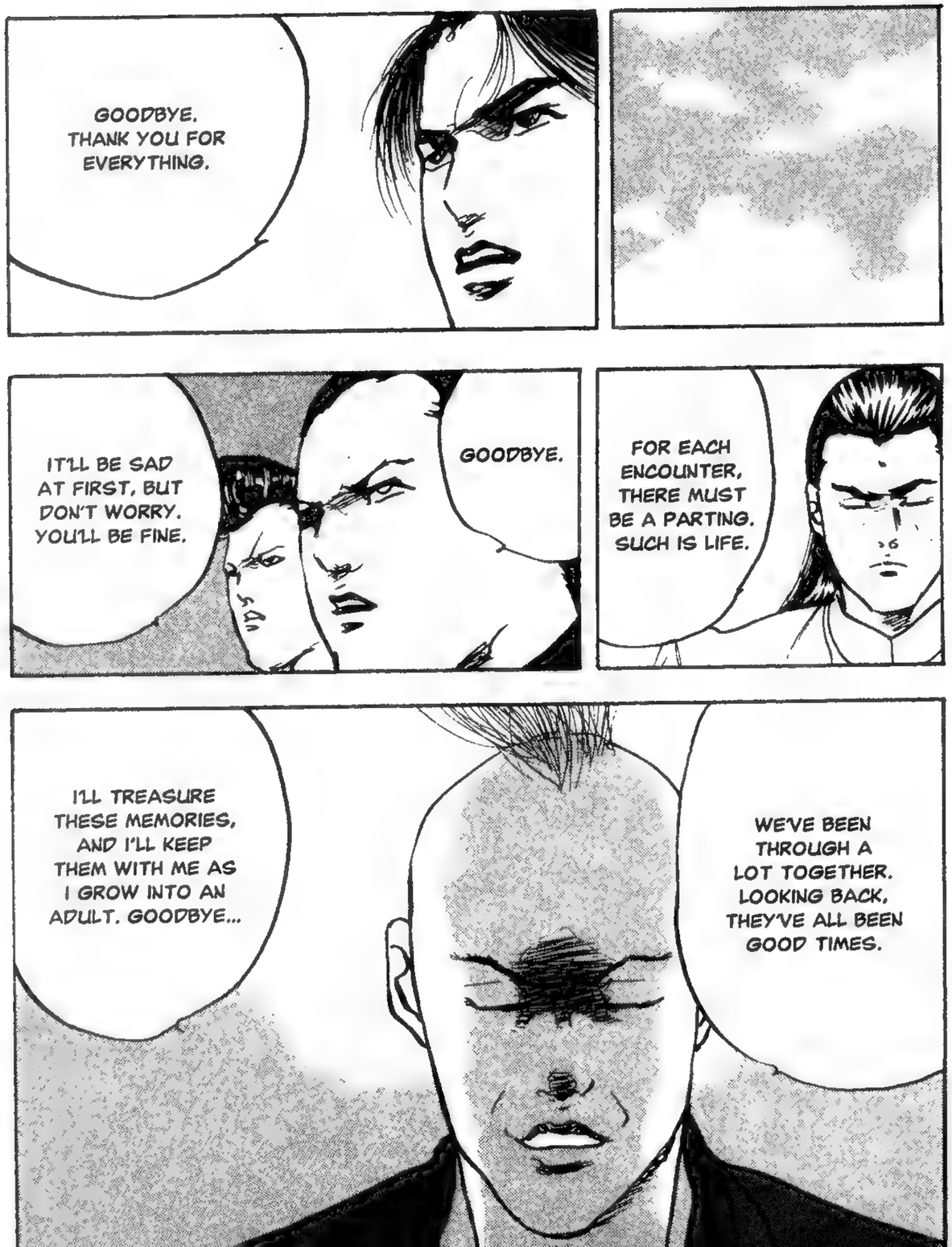
THERE'S NO WAY TO TELL. I MEAN, I BET HE'S NEVER OPENED ONE BEFORE!

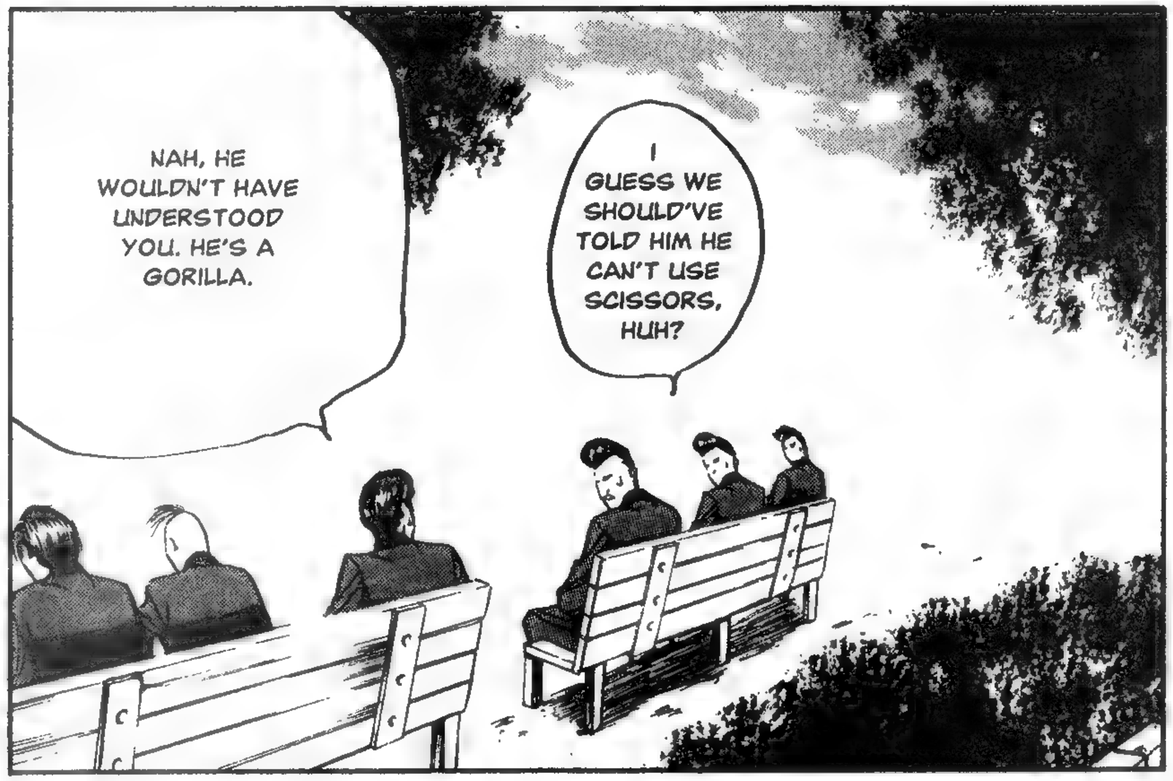
AS HAYASHIDA-KUN POINTED OUT, HUMANS ARE EASILY SWAYED BY SENSORY INFORMATION.

YOUR ARGUMENT IS SOUND, BUT DOES IT MEAN THAT **EVERYONE** CAN BE FOOLED IN THIS MANNER? THEREIN LIES THE QUESTION.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

CHAPTER 222: **GOODBYE**


GOODBYE. THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING.
IT'LL BE SAD AT FIRST, BUT DON'T WORRY. YOU'LL BE FINE.
GOODBYE.
FOR EACH ENCOUNTER, THERE MUST BE A PARTING. SUCH IS LIFE.
I'LL TREASURE THESE MEMORIES, AND I'LL KEEP THEM WITH ME AS I GROW INTO AN ADULT. GOODBYE...
WE'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT TOGETHER. LOOKING BACK, THEY'VE ALL BEEN GOOD TIMES.



DON'T GO BLAMING THE SIMIAN.

FAREWELL PARTY FOR THE GORILLA

YES?

BUT THERE'S STILL ONE THING I'D LIKE TO ASK.

OK, I UNDER-STAND NOW.

HM? WE RECEIVED YOUR MOTHER'S PERMISSION.

WHY ARE YOU DOING IT IN MY HOUSE?

NO, HE HAS NOT!

I MEAN, THE GORILLA'S HELPED YOU OUT ONCE OR TWICE, RIGHT?

SURE HE'S AN APE, BUT HE'S SHARED OUR LAUGHTER AND HARDSHIPS. HE'S ONE OF US. WE COULDN'T HAVE HIS GOING-AWAY PARTY IN SOME DEPRESSING OLD CLASSROOM, COULD WE?

HOW CAN YOU BE SO COLD, MAEDA?

HOLD ON A MINUTE!

FAREWELL PARTY FOR THE GORILLA

GOODBYE, GORILLA.

AH, IT SEEMS WE FORGOT TO INFORM YOU. ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN.

WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON HERE?! YOU GUYS ARE UP TO SOMETHING INSANE AGAIN, AREN'T YOU?

HE LEFT US WITH LITTLE CHOICE. THOUGH THE DECISION IS A SAD ONE, IT IS TIME TO PART WAYS WITH THE GORILLA.

THE OTHER DAY, WE WERE CHASTISED BY A TEACHER WHO FELT IT STRANGE FOR A GORILLA TO BE ATTENDING SCHOOL.

HEY.

A FEW DAYS LATER

SOMETIMES, YOU CAN DOWNRIGHT HATE SOMEONE BUT STILL FEEL SORT OF SAD WHEN THEY'RE GONE. THIS GUY MAY BE A GORILLA, BUT HE'S ONE OF US.

STILL, IT'S NOT LIKE I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'RE COMING FROM.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

SHP

OH.

NAH, I'M GOOD TODAY.

YOU WANNA MEET UP AFTER SCHOOL?

NNGH

YOU'RE REALLY LEAVING, HUH?

WE DIDN'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO THE GORILLA WHEN HE WAS HERE...

HUH?

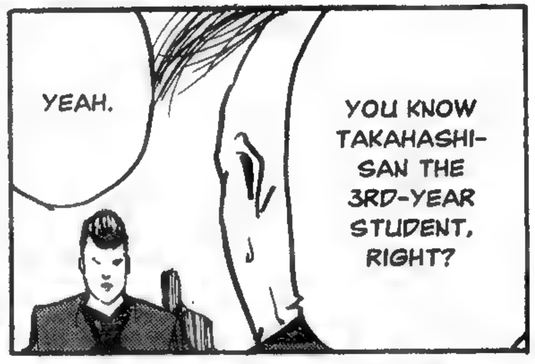
I GUESS THIS IS... YOU KNOW, **THAT.**

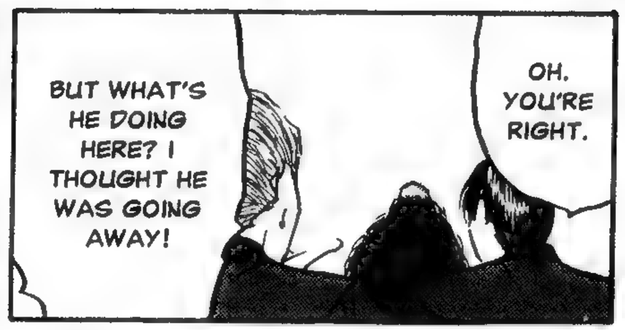
YEAH! YOU'RE RIGHT!

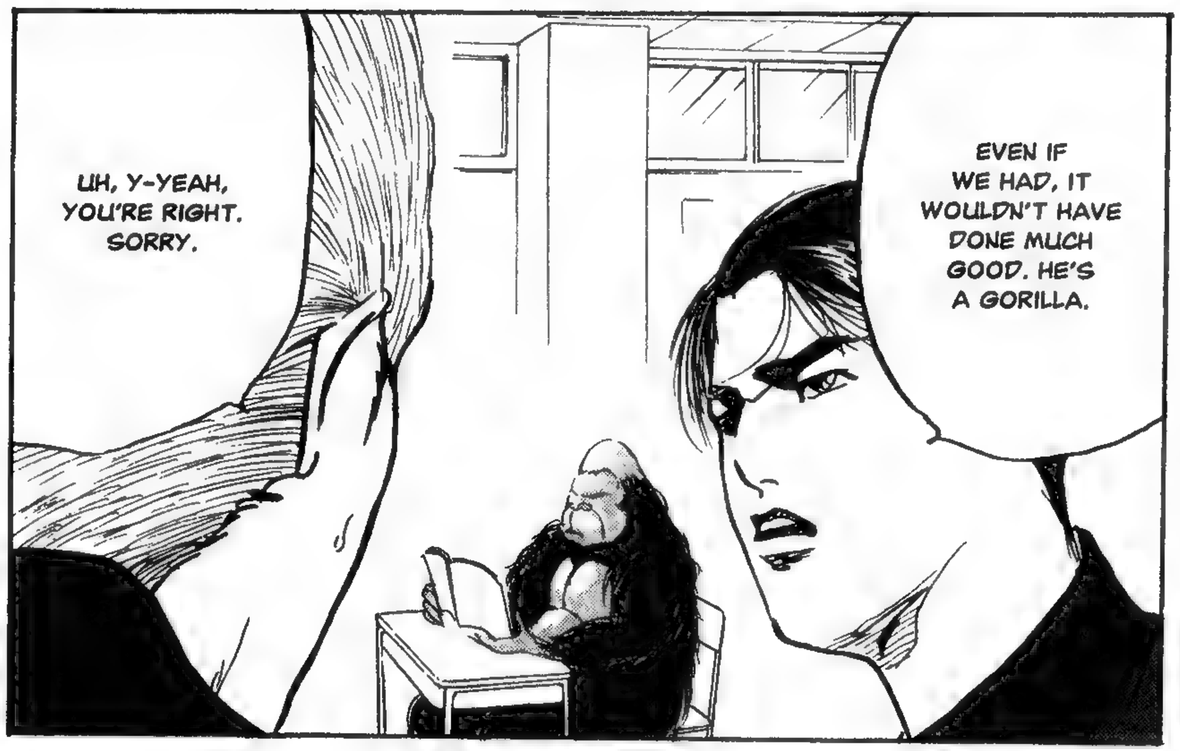
THIS IS OUR DAY TO SEND THE BIG GUY OUT WITH A BANG!

HEY, WHAT ARE YOU GUYS GETTING ALL DEPRESSED ABOUT?

CHAPTER 223: **DON'T STOP THOSE THINGS**







IT SORT OF FEELS LIKE MAEDA IS THE KINDEST OF THEM ALL.

MM, I GUESS.

HIS HENCHMAN WILL HAVE THEM FOR SURE!

THOSE THINGS REPRESENT THE MAN TAKAHASHI-SAN IS. HELL, IN A WAY, THEY **ARE** HIM!

AND WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT HERE...

YOU SEE?!

IT MIGHT EVEN MAKE IT AN EVENT!

OH, HIS THINGS! YOU'RE RIGHT. THAT DOES SORT OF MAKE THIS BIG NEWS.

THEY'RE GONNA MATCH, RIGHT?

WHAT KIND OF THINGS DO YOU THINK HIS HENCHMAN HAS?

THE ROUTE THAT TAKA-HASHI TAKES TO SCHOOL

THEN IT'S SETTLED! WE HAVE TO GO SEE FOR OURSELVES!

ACTUALLY, WE'VE BEEN SORT OF HOPING THAT'D BE THE CASE.

We just couldn't say it.

YOU'RE NOT THINKIN' STRAIGHT.

NO WAY! HE WOULDN'T HAVE THINGS!

IS WHETHER OR NOT HIS HENCHMAN HAS THINGS, TOO.

YEAH, I GETCHA. THE HENCHMAN'S WILL BE MORE, LIKE, LOW-KEY OR SOMETHING.

NAH, THERE'S NO WAY THEY'LL HAVE MATCHING THINGS. YOU'VE WATCHED SAMURAI DRAMAS BEFORE, RIGHT? THE SHOGUN ALWAYS WEARS DIFFERENT ARMOR FROM HIS MEN. IT'S LIKE THAT. THEIR THINGS ARE GONNA BE DIFFERENT SOMEHOW.

NATURALLY, SOMEONE'S GONNA RESPECT HIM ENOUGH TO SERVE WITH HIM AND BE HIS HENCHMAN. THAT MAKES SENSE.

LISTEN, TAKAHASHI-SAN IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE TOP 3RD YEARS AT OUR SCHOOL.

IT'S TAKA-HASHI-SAN!

THERE HE IS!

CHK

YUP.

YOU TWO JUST DON'T GET IT.

OF COURSE, IT'S A LITTLE WEIRD TO CALL SOMEONE A "HENCHMAN OF THE THINGS," BUT...

BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN THE GUY'S GONNA BE SOME HENCHMAN OF THE THINGS! C'MON!

YOU'RE RIGHT. HE'S WEARIN' A TIE.

HOW COME HIS HENCHMAN LOOKS LIKE SOME OFFICE WORKER?

I DON'T GET IT.

ALSO...

AND THAT'S HIS HENCHMAN!

AH. THE THINGS, HUH?

IS A HENCHMAN OF THE THINGS. NO MORE, NO LESS.

THIS ISN'T ABOUT TAKAHASHI-SAN BEIN' ONE OF THE TOP 3RD YEARS. IT ISN'T EVEN ABOUT HIM BEING A BADASS! THAT GUY THERE...

WHAT IS IT GONNA TAKE FOR YOU GUYS TO UNDERSTAND?

YEAH

PLUS, IF THEY WALKED TOGETHER, IT'D BE TWICE AS EMBARRASSING.

THE HENCHMAN'S SHOWING RESPECT! HE DOESN'T WANT TO WALK IN HIS MASTER'S SHADOW.

STILL... THEY'RE PRETTY FAR APART.

YEAH, IT'S LIKE THE MILITARY. IF YOU GO UP A RANK, YOU GET ANOTHER BAR.

AH! SO THE GUY AT THE TOP HAS THE MOST THINGS!

HMPH. IT'S NOT ABOUT APPEARANCES-- IT'S ABOUT **NUMBERS**!

STILL, THAT HENCHMAN'S, UH, THING IS PRETTY SHOWY. YOU THINK TAKAHASHI-SAN'S GONNA BE OK WITH THAT?

WELL, SURE. I DON'T CARE HOW TOUGH THE GUY IS-- JUST LOOK AT 'EM!

YOU THINK TAKAHASHI-SAN IS ASHAMED OF HIS THINGS?

WAIT A MINUTE. YOU MEAN...

HE'S GONNA SAY SOMETHING!

AH!

HM?

EXCUSE ME, DO YOU MIND?

HOW THE HELL SHOULD I KNOW?! WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THOSE THINGS ARE!

LIKE WHAT?

I'M SURE HE'S GOT HIS REASONS.

THEN WHY DOESN'T HE TAKE THEM OFF?

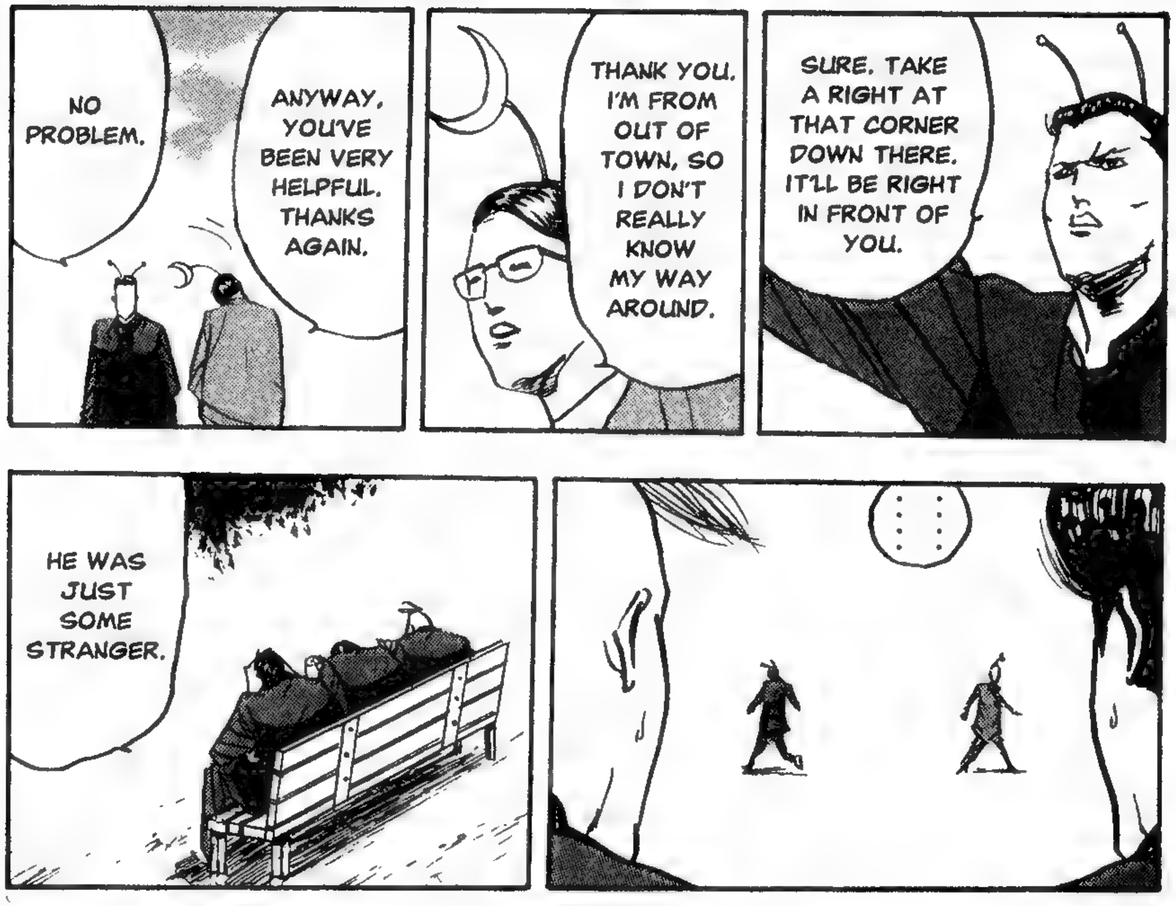
CHARACTER INTRODUCTION

DAISUKE MITSUYA

A teacher at Cromartie High School—in fact, the leader of the school's teachers. The impact of his appearance is undeniable, prompting surprised cries of "Huh? The school has teachers?!" Of course, if you stop to think about it, it's only natural that there be teachers—it is, after all, a school. If there were no teachers, Kaoruyama and the others would simply be a gang of teenagers who ditched school in order to get together and hang out.

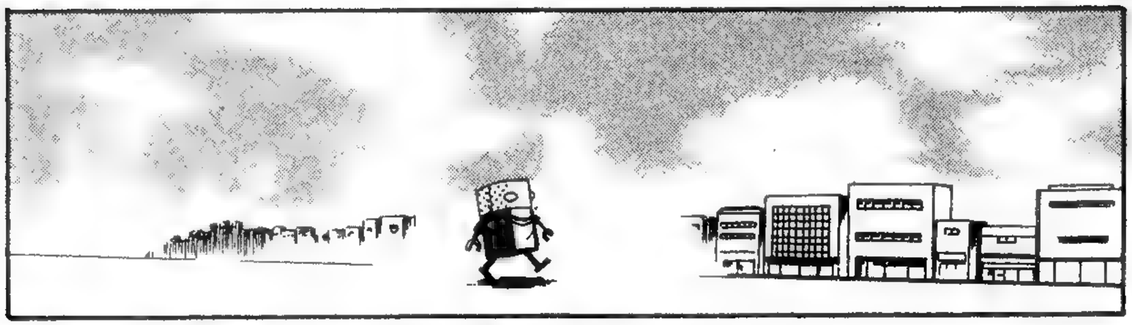
For decades, Mitsuya has inserted the lead into mechanical pencils from the front rather than the rear. The fact that he only recently noticed how tedious this is makes him worthy of applause. If you look closely, you'll see that his hand shakes as he tries to insert the lead. Heh.

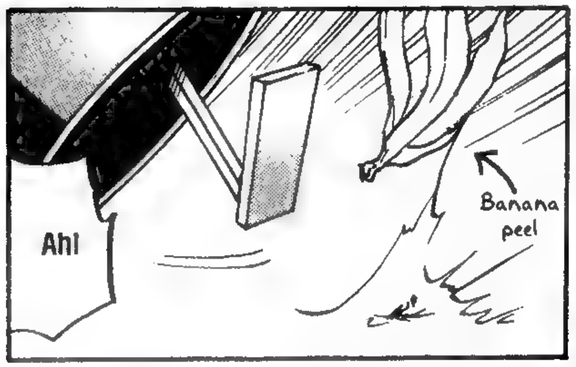
Go on, look!

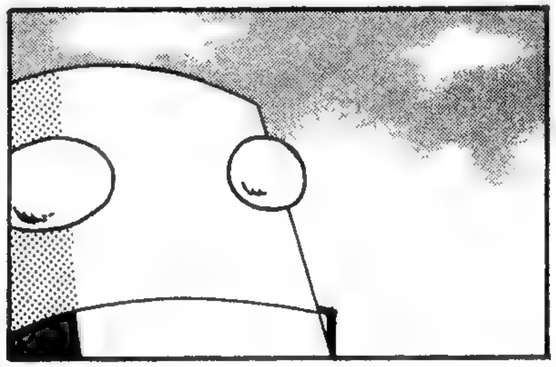

NO PROBLEM.
ANYWAY, YOU'VE BEEN VERY HELPFUL. THANKS AGAIN.
THANK YOU. I'M FROM OUT OF TOWN, SO I DON'T REALLY KNOW MY WAY AROUND.
SURE. TAKE A RIGHT AT THAT CORNER DOWN THERE. IT'LL BE RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU.
HE WAS JUST SOME STRANGER.

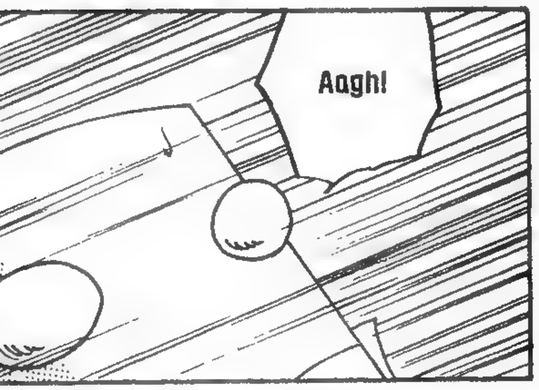
THE MYSTERY OF THE THINGS CONTINUES TO DEEPEN.

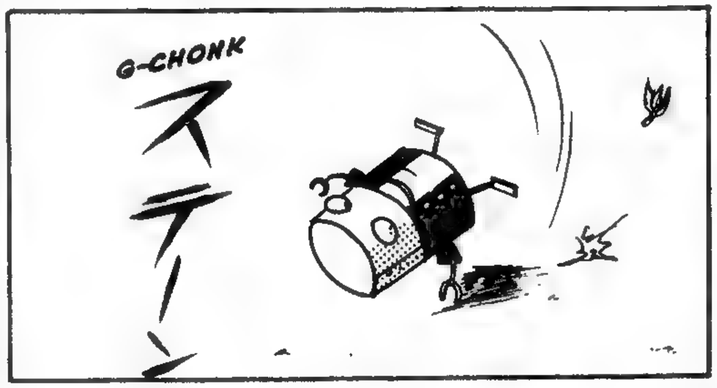
CHAPTER 224: **UP-DOWN BOY**

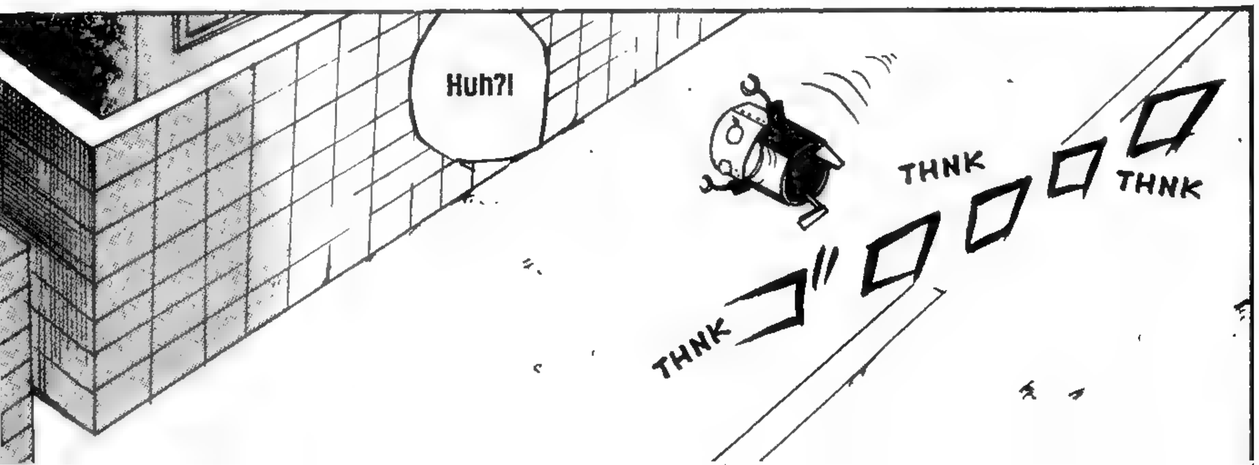












These two teachers are apparently Mitsuya's cronies—in other words, his juniors. Probably. What we know for sure is that Kuramoto hates the *squeak! squeak!* of Styrofoam and Hashida can't stand cockroaches.

Until recently, Kuramoto mistakenly believed his unmistaken assumption that Charlie Sheen and Emilio Estevez are brothers was mistaken (that wording doesn't make things very clear, does it?), which would indicate he's probably the most airheaded of the teachers. In any case, it's a safe bet we won't be seeing him or Hashida ever again.

The more you look at them, the plainer these guys look, don't you think?

KURAMOTO AND HASHIDA

CHARACTER INTRODUCTION

This ain't funny anymore!

THNK ゴロ THNK ゴロ

THNK ゴロ THNK ゴロ

As seen from the side

That's when it hit me.

I started feelin' foggy... Delirious.

THNK ゴロ THNK

Aagh!

I can't stop!

Damn!

How can I think about that at a time like this?

GOAL!

If tumbling like this was a sport, I'd be sure to win.

THNK ゴロ

CHONK

THNK ゴロ

THNK ゴロ

CHAPTER 225: **YOU MAY BE RIGHT**

DON'T YOU THINK THERE'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT MECHAZAWA THESE DAYS?
WHAT IS IT?
HEY, DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
HOW CAN I PUT THIS? YOU KNOW HOW PEOPLE CAN REINVENT THEMSELVES, RIGHT? IT'S LIKE THAT. HE'S DIFFERENT FROM BEFORE. HAVEN'T YOU GUYS NOTICED ANYTHING?
LIKE WHAT?
HE'S JUST SORT OF...
HOW'S HE DIFFERENT?
GIVE ME A BREAK! NOW, IF YOU SAID SOMEONE REINVENTED HIM, THAT'D BE A DIFFERENT STORY.
"PEO-PLE" CAN REINVENT THEM-SELVES?
HA HA! SAME OLD MECHA-ZAWA. YOU'RE A FUNNY GUY.
You know what? I slipped on a banana peel the other day.
Hey. Morning, guys.

BECAUSE HE'S RECTANGULAR.

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! YOU HAVE TO MOVE FASTER!

WHAT? LOOK WHERE?

WHAT?! NO, THAT'S NOT IT!

ARE YOU SURE IT'S NOT **YOU** WHO'S CHANGED AND NOT MECHAZAWA?

YOU KNOW, MAEDA, YOU'RE ACTING KIND OF STRANGE.

THESE HAVE ALREADY BEEN BROUGHT UP IN THE PAST, **REPEATEDLY**. THERE IS NO NEED TO GO DREDGING THEM UP AGAIN.

GRANTED, MECHAZAWA HAS BEEN KNOWN TO INCUR HIS SHARE OF BIASES. HOWEVER!

DAMMIT, IT'S HAPPENING NOW! LOOK!

TONK

Ow...

TO BE PERFECTLY BLUNT, WE ARE SICK OF JOKES SUCH AS THESE THAT ARE MADE AT MECHAZAWA'S EXPENSE.

YOU GUYS JUST DON'T GET IT, DO YOU?

YEAH! HE'S THE SAME AS ALWAYS.

HEY, DAMMIT! WHAT'S SO DIFFERENT ABOUT HIM?

SEE?! THAT'S DIFFERENT!

LIKE NOW! LOOK NOW!

YOU HAVE TO LOOK AT THINGS FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE.

DAMN! HE TURNED THIS WAY!

What's goin' on?

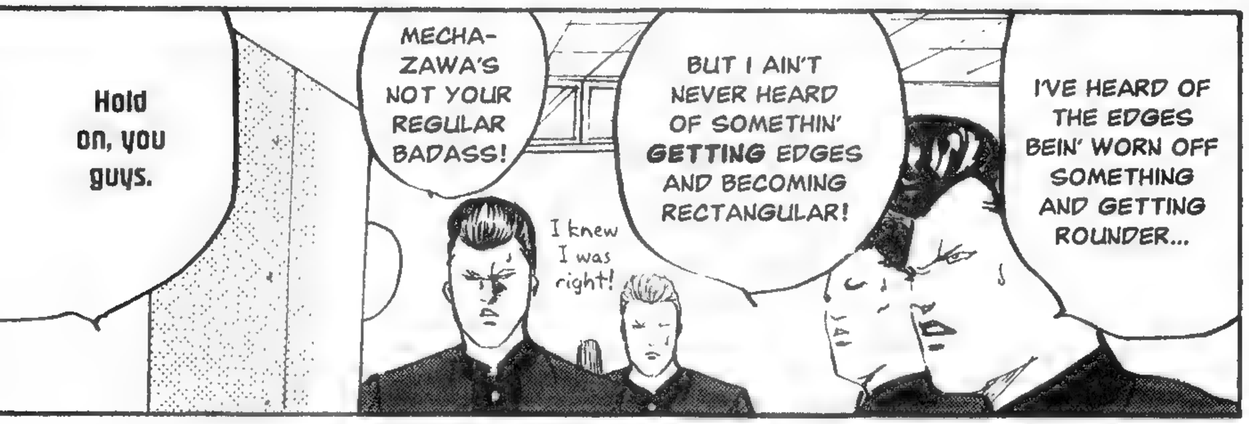
HUH? WHAT IS?

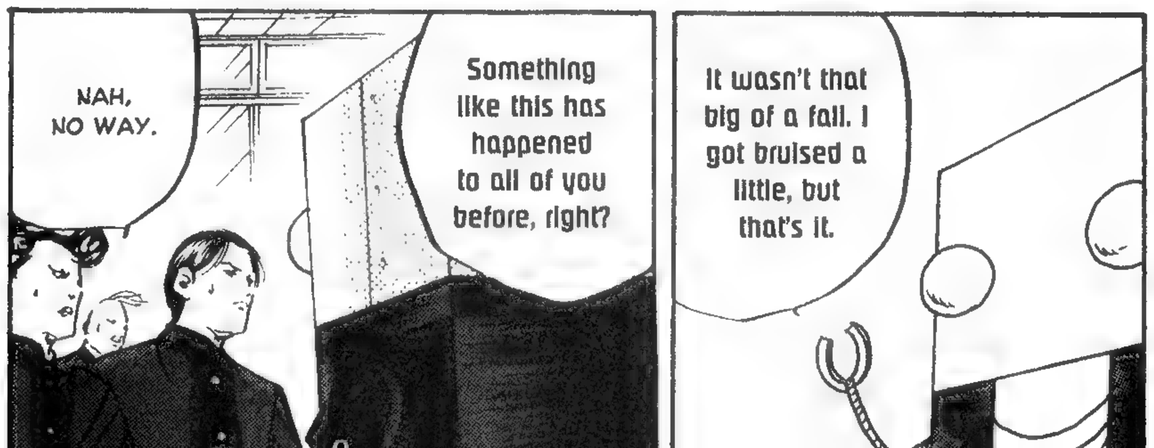
LOOK! LOOK BEHIND YOU RIGHT NOW!

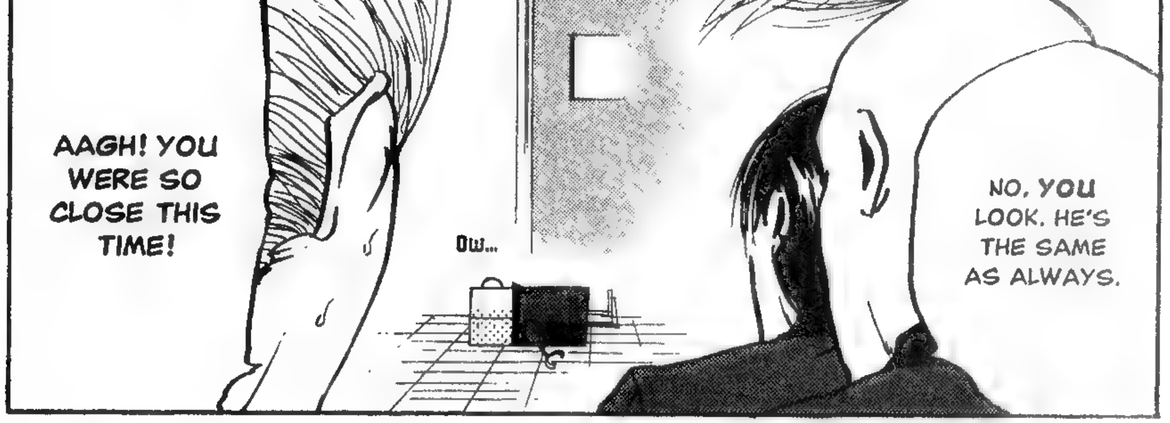
YOU STILL HAVEN'T SAID WHAT'S DIFFER-ENT.

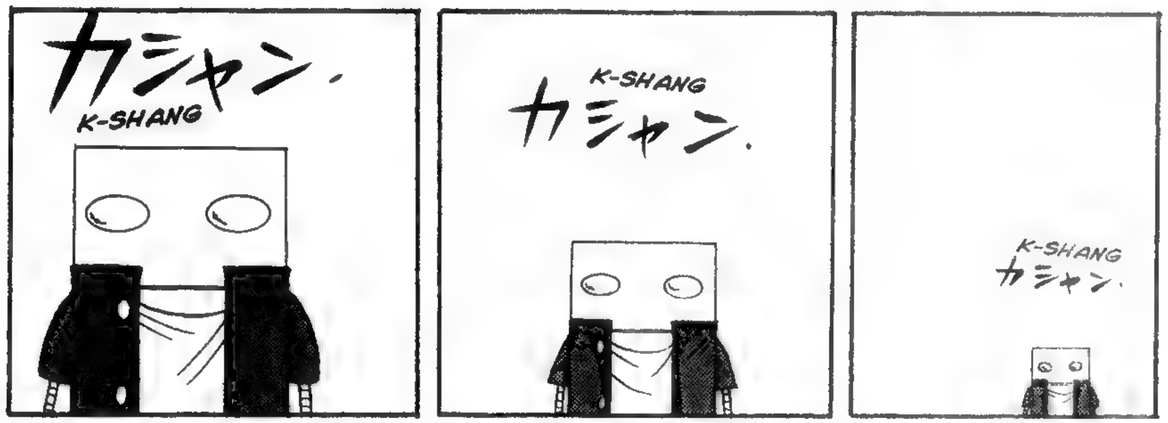
I SWEAR, YOU GUYS HAVE NO SENSE OF TIMING!

CHAPTER 226: **THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'**


Hold on, you guys.
MECHA-ZAWA'S NOT YOUR REGULAR BADASS!
I knew I was right!
BUT I AIN'T NEVER HEARD OF SOMETHIN' GETTING EDGES AND BECOMING RECTANGULAR!
I'VE HEARD OF THE EDGES BEIN' WORN OFF SOMETHING AND GETTING ROUNDER...


NAH, NO WAY.
Something like this has happened to all of you before, right?
It wasn't that big of a fall. I got bruised a little, but that's it.





LOOKS LIKE MECHAZAWA'S A TRANSFORMING ROBOT, TOO.

Nah, it's fine how it is.

SHOULD I WARM THIS UP FOR YOU?

THAT'LL BE 1,200 YEN.

C'mon, guys, get a grip. What are you talking about?

WOW, YOU'VE REALLY CHANGED. YOU'RE LIKE A WHOLE NEW PERSON. UH, MODEL.

After all, isn't that what makes a true badass? No matter what happens, I'm not gonna change--I'll always be the same.

You're not bein' fair. I mean, sure I'm a thug, but I always try to stay true to my principles.

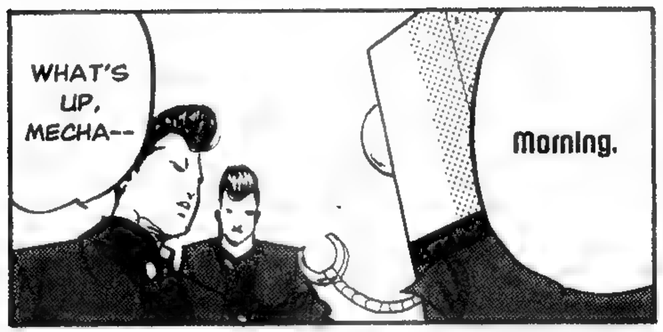
You just won't drop it, will you? I'm the same as always! Nothing has changed, alright?! And nothing is going to change!

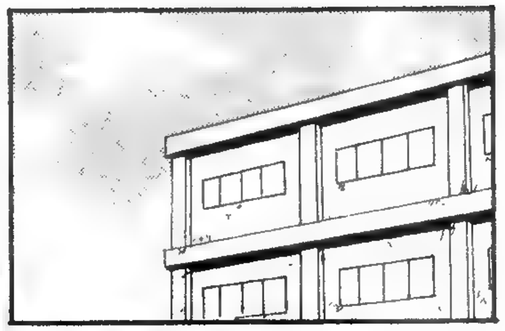
YEAH. NOTHING CAN STAY THE SAME FOREVER.

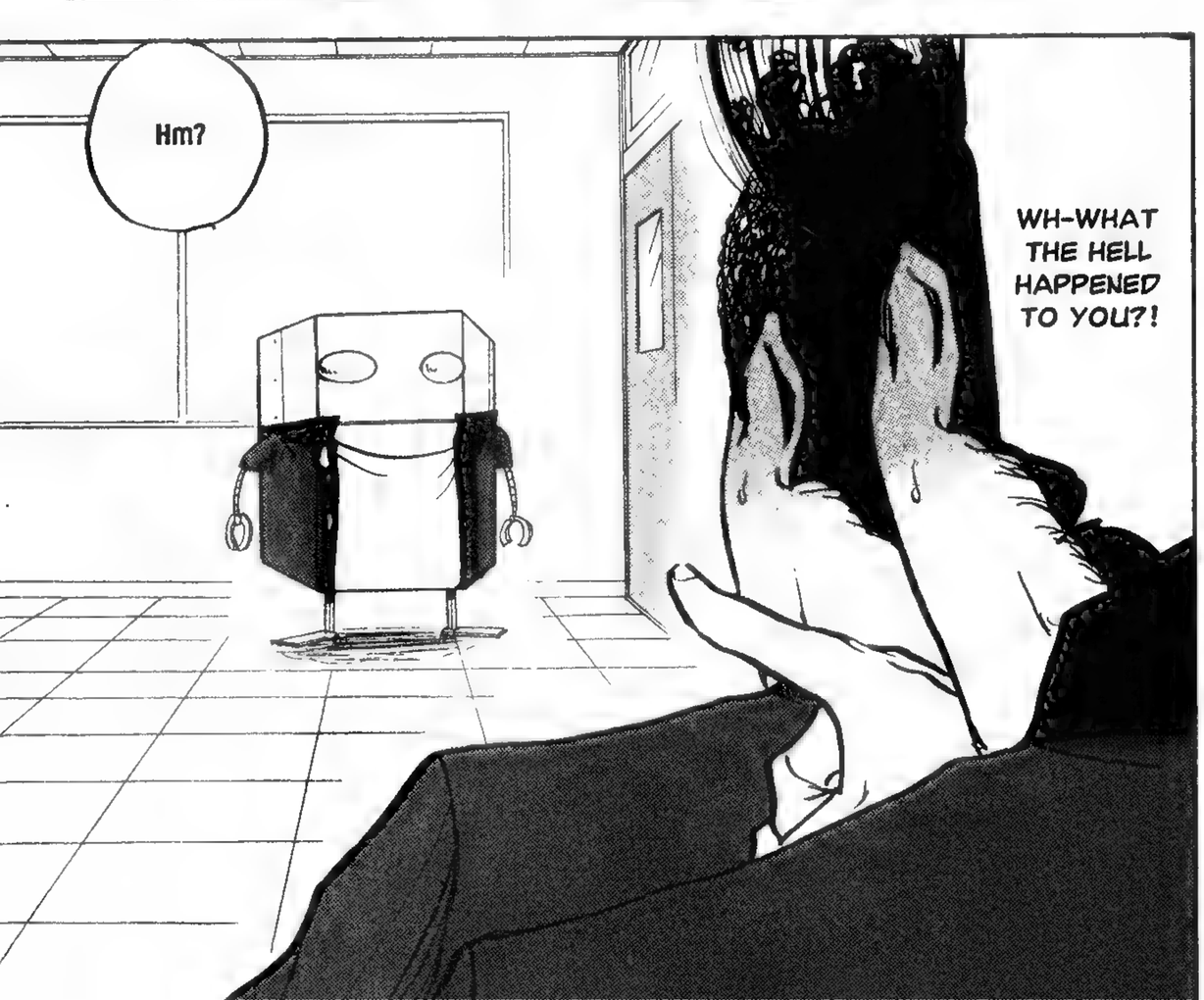
YOU CAN TALK ALL YOU WANT, BUT YOU'VE DEFINITELY CHANGED! IF YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED YET, TRUST US. YOU WILL!

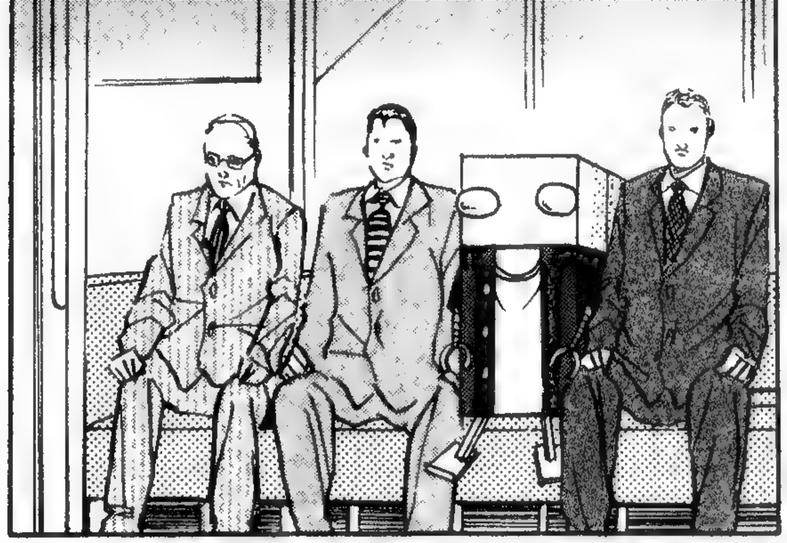
I've had enough of this. I'm outta here!

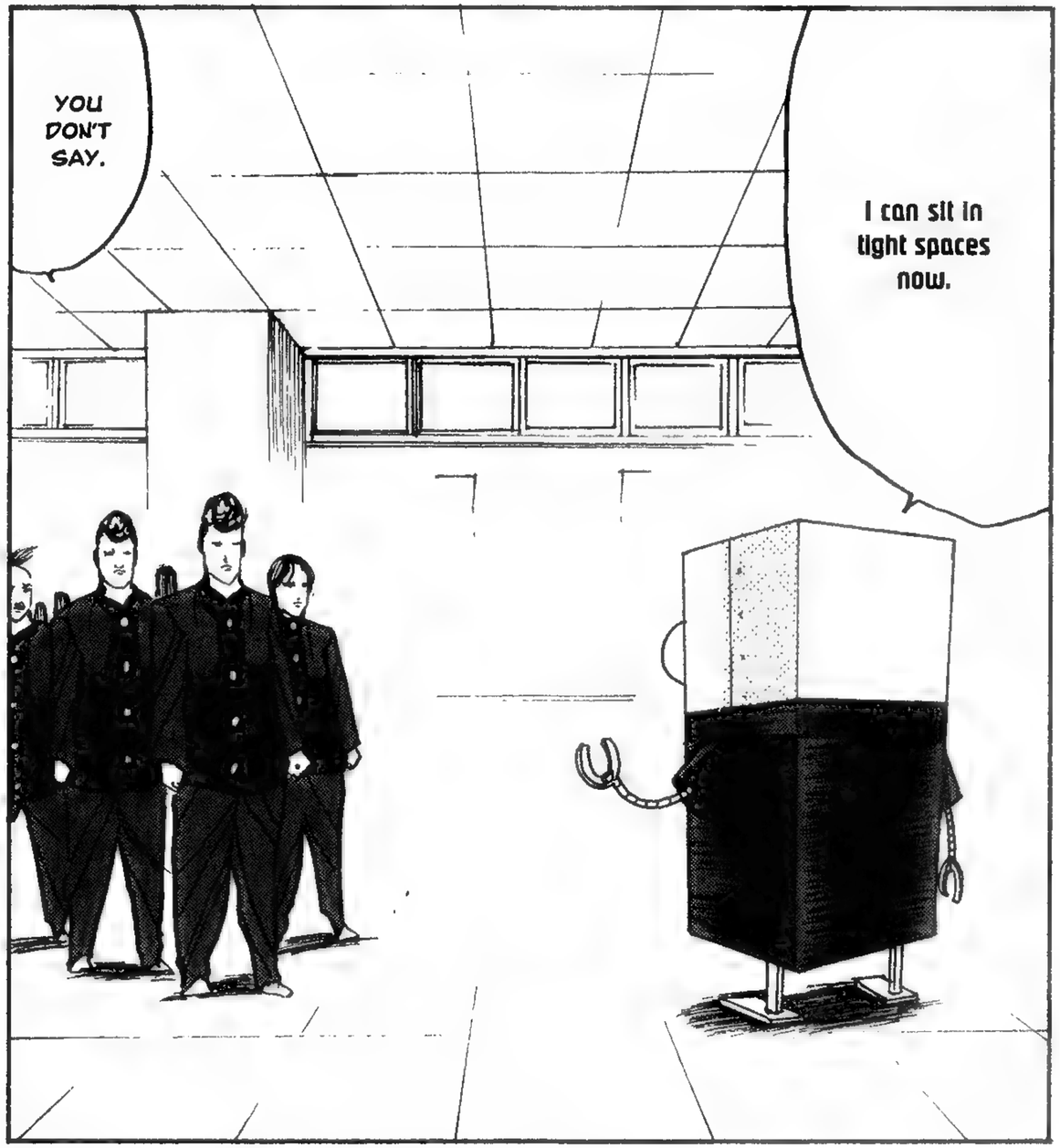
CHAPTER 227: **ROUNDABOUT**











HIS CUBIC VOLUME IS PROBABLY STILL THE SAME.

Yeah, what?

MECHAZAWA-KUN, THERE'S SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU.

THANK YOU.

VERY WELL. I SHALL ASK HIM DIRECTLY.

IT APPEARS HE FELL AGAIN.

WELL? WHAT DID HE SAY?

FIVE MIN-UTES LATER

IT'S NOT SO MUCH YOUR FACE AS YOUR, UH, SHAPE.

THIS IS WAY PAST THAT.

What's the big deal? Is there something stuck on my face?

CAN I SAY SOMETHING?

HM?

Jeez. You guys are strange.

Y-YOU KNOW WHAT? NEVER MIND. IT'S NOTHING.

EVERYONE, THIS MIGHT ACTUALLY BE REGARDED AS A POSITIVE SIGN.

YEAH. MAYBE THAT LAST TIME HE FELL REALLY MESSED UP HIS, UH, UNDERBODY.

HE SURE SEEMS TO FALL A LOT. MAYBE SOMETHING'S BEEN KNOCKED OUT OF WHACK. AT FIRST I THOUGHT HE JUST HAD A BAD SENSE OF BALANCE, BUT...

BUT THIS... WHERE DO I EVEN START?! I DON'T HAVE THE WORDS.

I CAN OVERLOOK HOW HE GOT SORT OF RECTANGULAR BEFORE...

COULDN'T IT BE THAT HE IS WORKING HIS WAY BACK TO BEING CIRCULAR?

IF YOU'LL RECALL, LAST TIME HE WAS RECTANGULAR, BUT NOW HE'S HEXAGONAL.

POSITIVE? WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

I'D LIKE TO KNOW THAT, TOO.

WHAT THE HELL'S HAPPENING TO HIM?

YEAH.

YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE? I DON'T THINK HE'S NOTICED.

ONE WEEK LATER

OK. AT THIS RATE, IT WON'T BE LONG NOW.

HE'S GOT EIGHT SIDES.

WELL?

EXACTLY. WE SHOULD TAKE A MORE LONG-TERM VIEW AND TRY NOT TO BE SO PESSIMISTIC.

OH, I GET IT! HE'S GETTIN' ROUNDER!

Head

HNG?

Hey, guys.

HNG!

MORNING.

A FEW DAYS LATER

YEAH, THAT'S A PRETTY SAFE BET.

YOU THINK NEXT TIME HE'LL BE ROUND AGAIN?

GOOD. WE'RE ALMOST THERE.

HE'S UP TO 12 SIDES.

HOW ABOUT NOW?

THIS IS IT!

OK!

Morning.

TWO WEEKS LATER

What's up?

UH, DO YOU MIND?

CHAPTER 228: **FISH**

What are you tryin' to say?
Huh?
Come on, not this stuff AGAIN! What's so different, huh? Go on, explain it to me!
YOU'VE, UH... WELL, YOU'VE SORT OF CHANGED AGAIN.
Look, as time goes by, everyone changes in some way or another, right? I'm not denying that.
THE THING IS, WE CAN'T REALLY PUT IT INTO WORDS...OR RATHER, WE DON'T WANT TO.
What's inside me, inside my heart, hasn't changed a bit. I'm me--nothing's different.
But I'll be clear about this...

HE LOOKS A LITTLE TALLER, TOO.

THAT'LL BE 298 YEN.

24-HR CONVENIENCE

Are you assholes makin' fun of me?!

YOU'RE MAKIN' THIS OUT TO BE DEEPER THAN IT REALLY IS. IT'S ACTUALLY PRETTY EASY...

COMING UP.

Oh, and let me have some of that *oden* there, too.

No, it's fine the way it is.

SHALL I WARM THIS UP FOR YOU?

Aah, say whatever the hell you want!

PUT ANOTHER WAY, THE CHANCES THAT YOU **HAVEN'T** CHANGED ARE ZERO. TRUST ME ON THIS.

NO MATTER HOW YOU SLICE IT, THIS TIME THERE'S NO DENYING THAT SOMETHING ABOUT YOU IS DIFFERENT.

LOOK, MECHAZAWA, YOU MAY NOT THINK YOU'VE CHANGED, BUT YOU HAVE.

But I'm not gonna change! I'm the same, dammit!

1

Wearing earplugs

SPLASSH

BWSH

SPLSH

SPLSH

SPLSH

SPLSH

SPORTS GYM

I haven't been back here to the pool in two months. I've really been slacking off.

One-two

One-two

Oh. Yeah, sorry.

YOU NEED TO PUT ON A CAP BEFORE YOU GO INTO THE POOL, PLEASE.

EXCUSE ME, SIR?

CHAPTER 229: **CHAIN REACTION**

CHALK IT UP TO REDUCED RESISTANCE. AND SPEEDOS.

HEH. THIS IS WHY I'M HOOKED ON MUGGING!

STILL, I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW EASY IT IS. ALL I HAVE TO DO IS THREATEN THESE CHUMPS AND THEY HAND OVER THEIR MONEY. SWEET!

I KNOW YOU GOT SOME! SHOW ME YOUR WALLET.

I, UH, DON'T HAVE ANY.

HUH? MONEY?

LET'S SEE IF I CAN'T FIND ME ANOTHER TARGET.

NOW THEN...

YOU LIVE AROUND HERE, RIGHT?

WH-WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO LEND YOU MONEY? I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOU!

THIS GUY'S PERFECT.

OH, YEAH. THERE'S ONE NOW.

YOU WANNA BE ABLE TO KEEP **WALKING** AROUND HERE?

YES?

HEY, BRO. CAN YOU COME HERE FOR A MINUTE?

THAT LOSER ONLY HAD 3,000 YEN ON HIM.

DAMN.

WHAT WAS THAT, DAMN IT?!

BUT AT FIRST GLANCE YOU APPEAR LITTLE MORE THAN A SOCIETAL WASHOUT, A WAYWARD DEGENERATE THAT WOULD NEVER IN A HUNDRED YEARS BE PURCHASING A TEXTBOOK.

I HOPE YOU'LL PARDON MY BLUNTNESS...

FOR ONE SUCH AS YOURSELF TO HAVE SEEN THE LIGHT, EMBRACING STUDY AND ENDEAVORING TO BUY STUDY MATERIALS...I THINK IT'S WONDERFUL. I'M QUITE MOVED.

FINE, WHATEVER. JUST HAND IT OVER.

INDEED, YOUR ACTIONS COULD BE OF SIGNIFICANCE TO OUR VERY SOCIETY! IT WILL BE MY PLEASURE TO LEND YOU WHAT FUNDS I AM ABLE.

YES, I HAVE **SOME** MONEY.

DON'T TRY TO FOOL ME, DAMMIT! I KNOW YOU HAVE MONEY!

WHAT?!

UNFOR-TUNATELY, I DO NOT CURRENTLY HAVE ANY.

YEAH, OK. JUST HURRY THE HELL UP.

LET ME TRY CONSULTING ONE OF MY FRIENDS.

AND WHAT ABOUT ME? HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO BUY MY GODDAMN TEXTBOOK?!

BUT ONLY ENOUGH FOR MYSELF. I DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH TO SPARE.

MONEY?

SORRY TO ASK THIS, BUT YOU THINK YOU CAN LEND ME SOME MONEY?

MAY I HELP YOU?

YOU'RE A WORDY SON OF A BITCH, AREN'T YA?

I WOULD SAY IT **IS** MY BUSINESS. IF I'M EXPECTED TO LEND MONEY TO A PERFECT STRANGER, I THINK IT ONLY NATURAL TO ASK HOW THAT MONEY WILL BE USED.

HUH? NONE OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS!

WHAT WILL YOU USE IT FOR?

I NEED TO BUY A TEXTBOOK. HAPPY?

FINE, I'LL TELL YOU.

HUH?!

NOT AT ALL. I THINK IT'S SPLENDID.

YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT. YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?

A TEXTBOOK?

AH, BUT WHAT OF THE GENUINELY NO-GOOD TYPES? THEY WOULDN'T BE BOTHERED WITH ATTEMPTING TO FIND EMPLOYMENT, WOULD THEY?

WOULDN'T IT BE BETTER FOR THOSE KINDS OF PEOPLE TO GET JOBS FIRST?

HM. I KNOW EXACTLY WHERE YOU'RE COMING FROM. THE THING IS...

HM?

AH!

I WONDER IF THERE'S ANYONE AROUND HERE THAT I KNOW...

THANK YOU, HAYASHIDA-KUN.

UNFORTUNATELY, I HAVEN'T GOT ANY MONEY ON ME. I'LL SEE IF I CAN FIND SOMEONE TO BORROW SOME FROM.

YEAH, OK. I CAN SEE HOW STRONGLY YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS.

THE TRUTH IS...

WHAT THE HELL FOR?

MONEY?

WOULD YOU MIND LENDING ME SOME MONEY?

WHAT UP?

HM?

AH!

I WONDER IF THERE'S ANYONE AROUND HERE I KNOW...

IF YOU'LL PARDON ME SHARING MY RATHER MUNDANE OPINION ON THE SUBJECT, I BELIEVE THAT WHAT PEOPLE SUCH AS THOSE REQUIRE MORE THAN ANYTHING IS EDUCATION! FURTHERMORE, WE HAVE AN **OBLIGATION** TO HELP HOWEVER WE CAN.

WITH THE STATE OF THE WORLD SUCH AS IT IS, A NUMBER OF PEOPLE FIND THEMSELVES IN THE MIRE OF SOCIETY'S LOWER CLASS, TRAPPED AT ITS BASE AND UNABLE TO SEE THE WAY OUT. I THINK YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THAT.

OK, LISTEN UP. THE TRUTH IS...

WHAT THE HELL FOR?

MONEY?

HEY, CAN YOU LEND ME SOME MONEY?

WHAT UP?

THAT, HAYASHIDA, IS WHY I AM CURRENTLY IN NEED OF MONEY.

HM?

AH!

IS THERE ANY-ONE HERE!...

OK, FINE.

I'M GONNA PAY YOU THAT BACK NEXT WEEK. BUT RIGHT NOW, WE NEED THAT OTHER MONEY FOR SOCIETY.

EDUCATION AND BASES?

ACTUALLY, UH, I DON'T REALLY GET IT MYSELF. BUT WE NEED MONEY TO HELP OUT WITH EDUCATION. AND BASES.

UH, I DON'T KNOW.

WHAT THE HECK FOR?

HUH? MONEY?

HEY, CAN YOU LEND ME SOME MONEY?

WHAT IS IT?

OH, IS THAT WHAT THIS IS? FINE. I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.

LOOK, BASICALLY, YOUR MONEY CAN HELP SOCIETY.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

YEAH, THAT MUST BE IT! "ONE-HALF BASE TIMES ALTITUDE EQUALS AREA," THAT KIND OF STUFF!

WAIT, DO YOU MEAN **BASE**? ISOSCELES TRIANGLES AND BASE AND ALL THAT?

BASES? LIKE MILITARY BASES?

BUT APPARENTLY, WE NEED MONEY TO STUDY BASES.

HM?

BUT LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING FIRST.

THANKS.

UNFORTUNATELY, I'M A LITTLE SHORT RIGHT NOW. I'LL TRY ASKING AROUND THOUGH.

OH. COULD YOU MAYBE ASK A FRIEND?

BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY.

SOCIETY, HUH? THEN YEAH, I'D LIKE TO HELP.

I DON'T REALLY GET IT MYSELF, BUT IT'S FOR SOCIETY.

OK, BUT WHY DO YOU NEED MONEY FOR THAT?

TO BE HONEST, NO, THAT WASN'T ABOUT SOCIETY.

AND I HAVEN'T GOTTEN IT BACK YET. WAS THAT TO HELP OUT SOCIETY, TOO?

I LENT YOU 3,000 YEN LAST MONTH, DIDN'T I?

YOU WILL? THANKS A LOT!

I'LL GO GET HIM RIGHT NOW!

REALLY?

WAIT, I KNOW JUST THE GUY! HE'S PERFECT!

I COULD USE YOUR HELP.

WHAT UP?

HM?

AH!

I WONDER IF THERE'S ANYONE AROUND HERE I KNOW...

OK, HERE HE IS!

THE AREA OF ISOSCELES TRIANGLES?

THE TRUTH IS, SOMEBODY ASKED ME TO ASK YOU ABOUT, UH...THE AREA OF ISOSCELES TRIANGLES.

I'D REALLY LIKE TO HELP, BUT I'VE SORT OF GOT MY HANDS FULL WITH SOMETHING ELSE RIGHT NOW.

YEAH, I WASN'T SURE IF I SHOULD EVEN ASK, BUT YOU'RE THE ONLY GUY I CAN COUNT ON.

I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THAT.

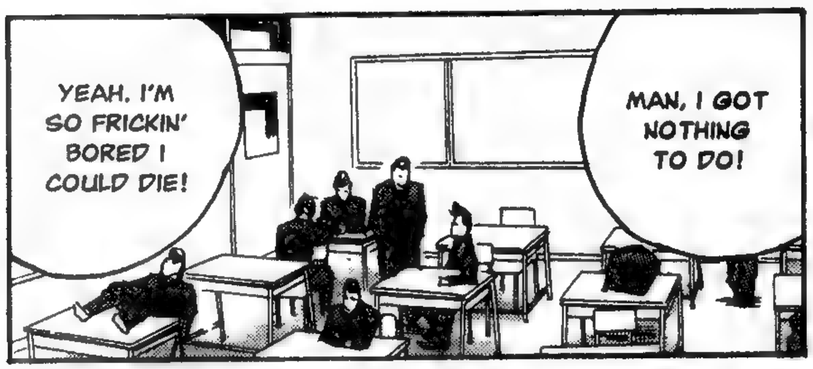
.....

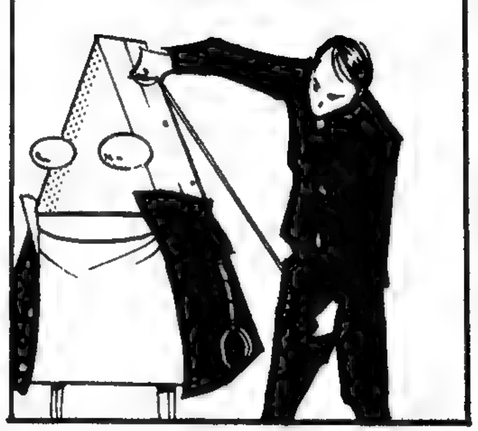
IF ONLY I KNEW SOMEONE WHO KNEW ABOUT ISCOCELES TRIANGLES...

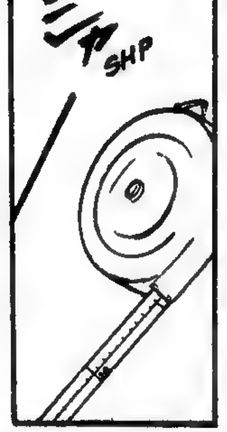
IT'S FOR SOCIETY, HUH? WELL, I CAN'T TURN MY BACK ON THAT.

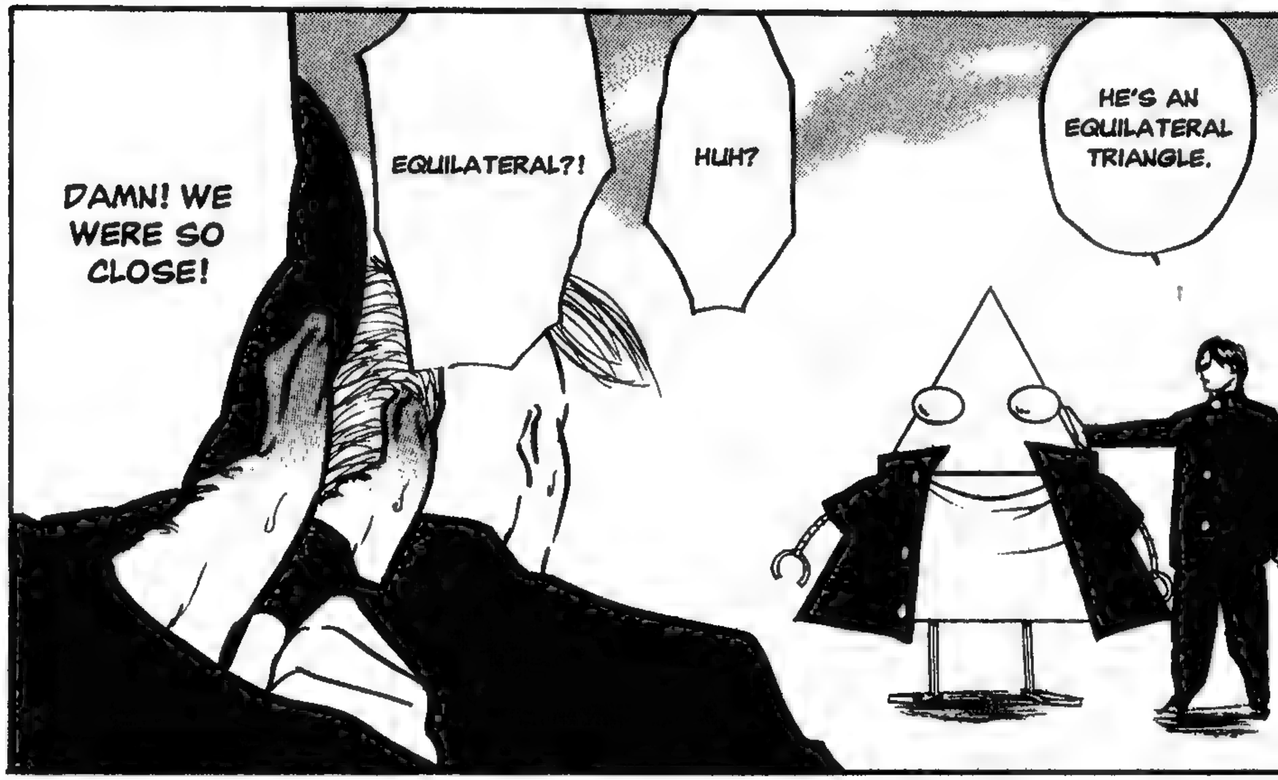
BUT THIS IS ABOUT CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIETY.

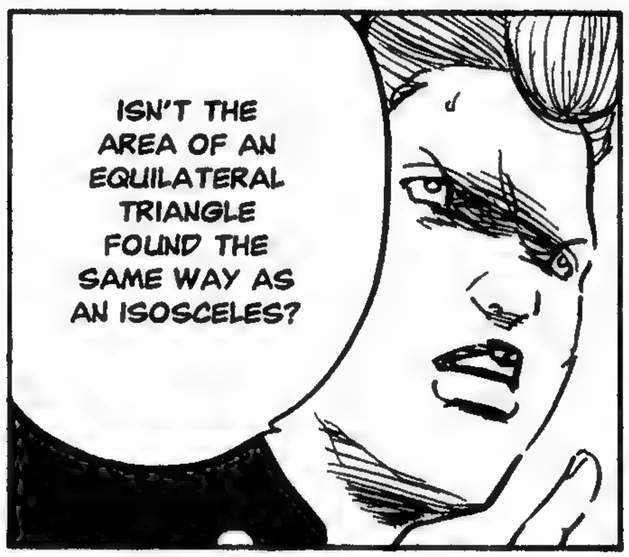
CHAPTER 230: HAYASHIDA IN THE SKY WITH DIAMONDS











YES.

LISTEN, THE ONLY REASON PEOPLE ARE AFRAID OF HEIGHTS IS BECAUSE THEY CAN'T FLY!

YOU'RE AN IDIOT!

NO. I'M AFRAID OF HEIGHTS.

WELL I'M THE KIND OF GUY WHO NEVER FORGETS A DREAM LIKE THAT. AND I BELIEVE THAT ONE DAY, I **WILL** BE ABLE TO FLY!

I WANT TO FLY AROUND UP IN THAT BIG SKY, FREE AS A BIRD! EVERYONE'S DREAMED OF DOING THAT AT LEAST ONCE, RIGHT?

YOU'LL NEVER KNOW FOR SURE UNLESS YOU CAN ACTUALLY FLY. UNTIL THEN, IT'S ALL JUST SPECULATION.

I THINK I SEE WHERE YOU'RE COMING FROM...

TAKE SOMEONE WHO CAN'T SWIM WORTH A DAMN. OF COURSE HE'S GONNA BE AFRAID OF THE WATER--HE CAN'T SWIM! BUT SOMEONE WHO'S GOOD AT SWIMMING WON'T BE AFRAID, WILL HE?

THAT'S HOW EVERYONE DREAMS OF IT, MAN!

LIKE THIS.

TO EXPLAIN WITH A PICTURE, IT'D BE...

HUH? NOT YET?

NOT YET.

YEAH, BUT **YOU** CAN'T FLY EITHER.

BECOMING AN ADULT MEANS GETTING DRAGGED DOWN BY COMMON SENSE, TURNING INTO SOME BORING OLD DUDE WITH NO SENSE OF INDIVIDUALITY.

YEAH, BUT AS PEOPLE GET OLDER, THEY ONLY THINK ABOUT EVERYDAY STUFF, LIKE WHERE THEY'RE GOING TO WORK OR WHAT THEY'RE GOING TO EAT TOMORROW. THEY FORGET THE DREAMS THEY HAD AS KIDS.

HUH?

HMPH. TAKE A LOOK AT MY FEET.

YOU'RE SAYIN' YOU'RE, LIKE, DETERMINED TO FLY?

THE SKY, HUH?

HAVEN'T YOU EVER WANTED TO FLY UP IN THE SKY?

ME?

YOU MIGHT BE A FACELESS DRONE OF AN ADULT NOW, BUT LONG AGO YOU WERE FILLED WITH DREAMS, RIGHT?

HEY, HAYA-SHIDA!

HM?

YEAH.

STEP BY STEP, SLOWLY WORKIN' TOWARD YOUR GOAL...THAT'S THE KIND OF GUY HAYASHIDA IS.

HUH?!

I KEEP MY FEET OFF THE GROUND TO TRAIN ME FOR BEING UP IN THE AIR.

. . . . . .

I'VE STILL GOT A LONG WAYS TO GO.

RATTLE

OF COURSE, I'VE ONLY JUST STARTED.

YEAH! TO MAKE HIS BODY LIGHTER!

HE'S ON A DIET?!

HE WHAT?!

HUH?

NAH, I'M LAYING OFF THE SWEET STUFF RIGHT NOW.

I WENT TO A HOT SPRINGS RESORT YESTERDAY. I BROUGHT BACK SOME SWEETS IF YOU WANT SOME.

WATCHIN' SOMEONE RACE TOWARD HIS DREAMS... IT'S POWERFUL STUFF.

YEAH. THE STUFF WE LEFT BEHIND WHEN WE WERE KIDS.

SEEIN' HAYASHIDA RIGHT NOW MAKES ME REMEMBER THINGS I'D FORGOTTEN.

YOU KNOW...

HE'S NOT FOOLIN' AROUND!

LOOK! HIS LEGS ARE UP HIGHER THAN BEFORE!

YOU SAID IT. THIS TIME, HE'S SERIOUS.

HE'S REALLY GOIN' AFTER IT, KEEPING AN EYE ON THE BASICS. HE'S PUT TOGETHER A PRETTY SOLID STRATEGY.

WHAT ARE YOU, AN IDIOT?! IT'S TOO EARLY FOR THAT!

AIN'T IT ABOUT TIME HE PUTS WINGS ON HIS BACK OR SOMETHING?

HEY.

HE'S STILL AT IT, HUH?

CHECK OUT HAYA-SHIDA.

A FEW DAYS LATER

YEAH! WE SHOULD CHEER HIM ON!

I FEEL LIKE HAYA-SHIDA'S TAUGHT US AN IM-PORTANT LESSON.

THEY STUCK AT IT AND THEY BUILT THE AIR-PLANE!

WE SHOULDN'T LAUGH AT HIM EITHER. THE WRIGHT BROTHERS WERE PROBABLY LAUGHED AT WHEN THEY SAID THEY WERE GONNA FLY, BUT SURE ENOUGH...

A FEW DAYS LATER

CHAPTER 231: **QUICK-CHANGE WORLD**

HEY, GUYS? THERE'S SOMETHIN' I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.

YEAH, THAT'S A TOUGH ONE. IT DOESN'T SEEM, LIKE, PHYSICALLY POSSIBLE.

And we don't wanna think about it.

HOW COME MECHAZAWA IS A TRIANGLE NOW?!

YEAH!

OK! I SAY WE WATCH HIS EVERY MOVE AND SEE WHAT HE DOES.

THIS CALLS FOR A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION.

HE'S STILL KEEPIN' AT IT!

CHECK OUT HAYASHIDA!

THIS HAS GOT NOTHIN' TO DO WITH FLYING!

WAIT A MINUTE. I THINK SOMETHING'S DIFFERENT...

AAAH

DO YOU EVEN CARE ABOUT FLYING ANYMORE?!

JUMPED, YOU MEAN.

I FLEW 20 INCHES YESTER-DAY.

THAT SOAK THERE IS GOOD FOR THE BODY.

DING

Whoa!

TONK

Owl

CHONK

SWSSH

DING

AH! HE FELL!

G-CHONK

Aagh!

K-SHANG

AGH! HE GOT STUCK!

HE'S A RECTANGLE AGAIN!

HUH?

Here we go.

Hngh

BUT HE AIN'T A TRIANGLE YET.

HE CHANGED SHAPE AGAIN.

Ow...

BUT HOW DID HE GET TO BE A TRIANGLE?

OH. SO THAT'S HOW HE GOT TURNED INTO THAT SHAPE.

WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES THIS GUY GET ALL TRIANGULAR?!

YEAH. STILL, WHAT WE'VE SEEN IS PRETTY HARDCORE.

HE STILL ISN'T TURNING INTO A TRIANGLE!

ACUPUNCTURE

MASSAGE BONE SETTING

ORTHOPEDIC CLINIC

. . . . . .

. . .

MAYBE THAT'S WHERE HE GETS TURNED INTO A TRIANGLE!

LOOK! HE'S GOING INTO THAT CLINIC!

HE'S GOIN' INTO THAT BUILDING!

AH!

K-SHANG

HUH?!

SWSH

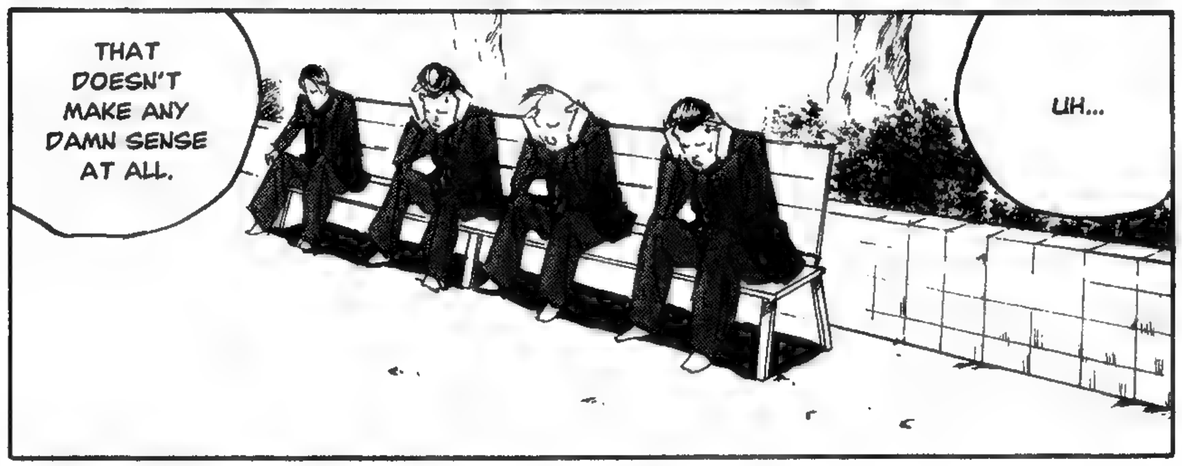
HE'S A RECTANGLE AGAIN.

HIDEKI TAKAHASHI

CHARACTER INTRODUCTION

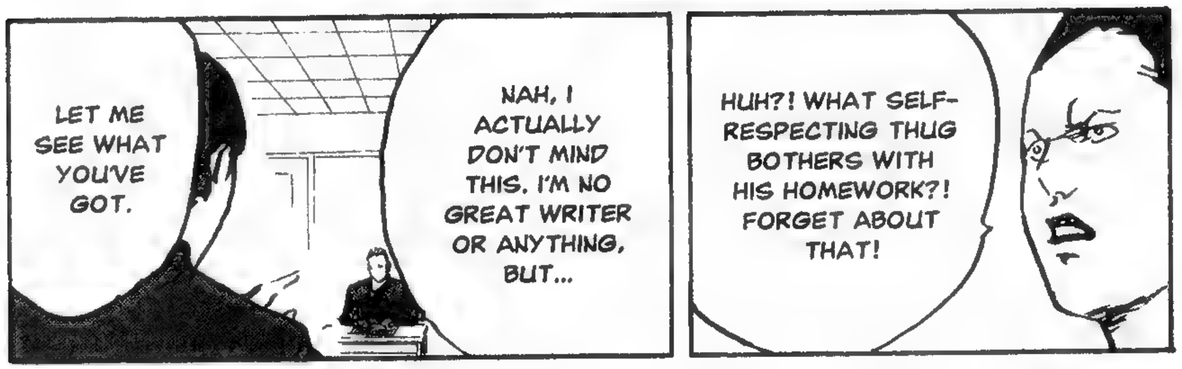
Takahashi is a man of power, a 3rd year who has earned the respect of all the students at Cromartie High. (He's being introduced here because it's been a while since we've seen him.) He also tends to have a pair of things attached to his head, a mystery that will probably never be solved. He's popular, tough in a fight and all-around perfect at whatever he does, but what makes the most lasting impression is his things.

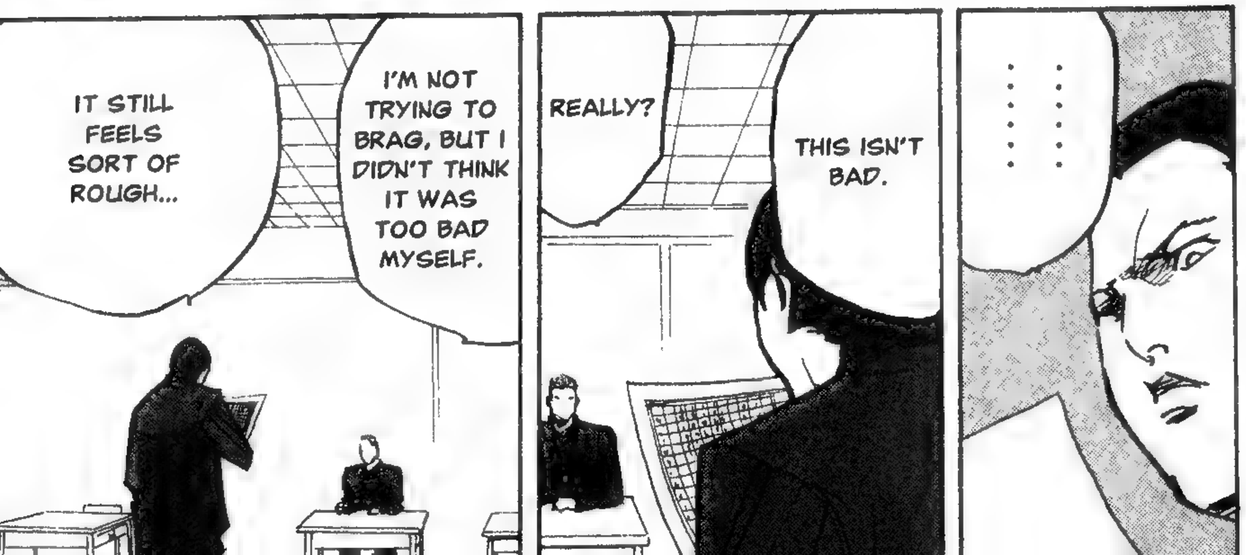
This time around, we saw another person, a complete stranger, with things (or, rather, *a* thing) of his own on his head. My first thought was to have the two engage in conversation as kindred spirits, something like, "Oh, you too? Yes, I have them as well." But I was told in no uncertain terms what an amateurish idea that was.



THEY SURE LOOK NICE WHEN THEY SMILE.

CHAPTER 232: **PAPERBACK WRITER**

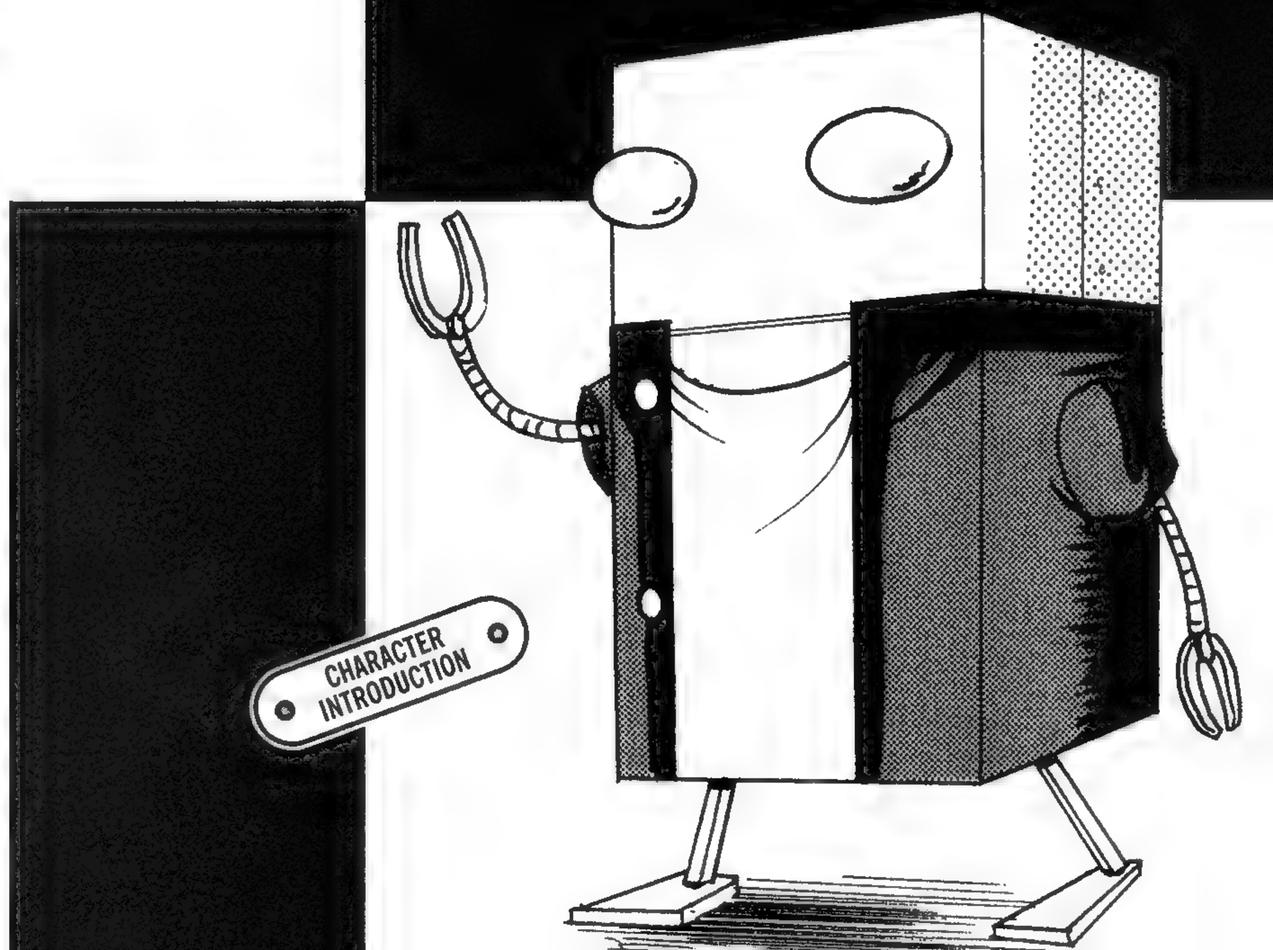

LET ME SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT.
NAH, I ACTUALLY DON'T MIND THIS. I'M NO GREAT WRITER OR ANYTHING, BUT...
HUH?! WHAT SELF-RESPECTING THUG BOTHERS WITH HIS HOMEWORK?! FORGET ABOUT THAT!



RECTANGULAR MECHAZAWA

The man has changed. Or rather, his shape has changed (and quite dramatically as well). Mechazawa asserts that though his shape has changed, what's inside remains the same...but the people around him couldn't care less about that. They're too busy being astonished (and rightfully so) at his altered appearance. It would seem he's made of softer stuff than we'd previously thought.

It was surprising to see that Mechazawa has an interest in physical fitness and has been swimming at the local pool. It's all well and good if he rusts, but I'm worried he'll accidentally electrocute the other swimmers. (LOL) The lifeguard probably should have been concentrating on that instead of making a crack about not wearing a cap.



HE WROTE IT? YEAH, SHOW ME.

MAEDA WROTE THIS. I WAS HOPING YOU'D TAKE A LOOK AT IT.

WHAT IS IT?

HAYASHIDA, DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?

SURE. GOOD LUCK WITH IT.

IT'LL BE FINISHED TOMORROW. YOU SHOULD READ IT THEN.

YEAH. I'M ACTUALLY STILL ONLY HALF-DONE.

BUT WITH A LITTLE POLISH, THIS COULD BE REALLY GOOD. IT'S GOT A SOLID FOUNDATION.

AH! YOU, TOO?

BUT I REALLY LIKED THIS PART WITH KATCHAN.

HMM. IT'S OK, I GUESS.

WELL? HOW IS IT?

I MADE A COUPLE TWEAKS TO IT.

MAEDA! HOW'S THE STORY COMING?

THE NEXT DAY

WHEN THE TWO OLD FRIENDS MEET, KATCHAN IS TRAPPED. HE CAN'T GO BACK TO HOW THINGS USED TO BE! THAT'S WHEN YOU SHOULD FOCUS IN ON KATCHAN--HIS CONFLICTS, HIS MENTAL STATE. THERE'S A LOT RIDING ON HOW YOU PORTRAY THAT.

THE PROTAGONIST AND KATCHAN ARE CHILDHOOD FRIENDS, RIGHT? THEY GO TO DIFFERENT SCHOOLS, AND KATCHAN FALLS IN WITH YOSHIO, THE BAD GUY OF THE STORY.

YOU THINK SO?

IT TURNED OUT REALLY WELL.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

HMM

ONE WEEK LATER

THAT'S THE SPIRIT! GOOD LUCK!

OK! I'LL HAVE THE REVISIONS BY NEXT WEEK.

HM, I THINK THAT'S SORT OF AN EXAG-GERATION, BUT...

IN A WAY, IT AFFECTS THE ENTIRE STORY.

ANYWAY, THAT'S JUST MY OPINION. YOU'D PROBABLY HEAR SOMETHING DIFFERENT IF YOU GOT SOMEONE ELSE TO READ IT.

REALLY? THAT WAS THE PART I CARED THE LEAST ABOUT.

YEAH. I ESPECIALLY LIKE YOUR PORTRAYAL OF KATCHAN, THE CHILDHOOD FRIEND.

PRAISE OF HIS WORK SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL, DRAWING IN STUDENTS FROM OTHER CLASSES.

MAEDA'S WORK SLOWLY GARNERED A REPUTATION...AND A LOYAL FAN BASE.

AND SO...

TOILET

C'MON, MAEDA!

MAEDA! I WANNA READ MORE!

UH

THE MORE YOU READ IT, THE MORE YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT!

YOU SAID IT. MAEDA'S THE BEST!

MAN, THIS IS REALLY DAMN GOOD!

BUT NOW THAT IT'S GOTTEN POPULAR, I FEEL A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY.

AT FIRST IT WAS JUST ABOUT HARD WORK...

I CAN'T HANDLE ALL THIS PRESSURE!

HM?

IT'S JUST SORT OF DRAGGING ON LATELY, HUH?

BUT I CAN'T BETRAY MY READERS' EXPEC-TATIONS!

IT'S HARD TRYING TO STAY POPULAR.

REALLY? THANKS.

THIS IS GOOD STUFF.

HUH?

YEAH. HIS SECOND BIG BRAWL IS ABOUT TO START, RIGHT? I WANNA SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

HEY, WHEN DO WE GET TO READ WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

I KNEW IT.

ESPECIALLY THIS PART WITH KATCHAN.

I NEED TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT. FOR REAL.

HUH?

DAMMIT, MAEDA! ENOUGH WITH THE JOKES ALREADY.

UH, THERE IS NOTHING NEXT. THAT'S THE END.

HUH? A SURVEY?!

WE TOOK THE LIBERTY OF CONDUCTING A SURVEY.

I SORT OF DON'T WANT TO ASK THIS, BUT... DO YOU KNOW HOW POPULAR IT IS LATELY?

SURE, IT WAS GOOD AT FIRST, BUT...

!!

YEAH. IT'S GOTTEN KINDA BORING.

HUH? YOU MEAN MAEDA'S STORY?

WHAT?

YOUR THINKING IS FLAWED.

AAH, GOOD. SO THERE WEREN'T TOO MANY VOTES FOR "BORING."

THE MOST POPULAR CHOICE WAS "AVERAGE."

THERE ARE THREE CHOICES: INTERESTING, AVERAGE AND BORING.

WHICH KINDA SUCKS FOR US ORIGINAL FANS.

IT'S STILL POPULAR, BUT IT COULD JUST BE FEEDIN' OFF ITS OWN REPUTATION.

YEAH. IT'S GOTTEN, LIKE, STEREOTYPICAL.

IT JUST DOESN'T HAVE THE SAME IMPACT.

INDEED. IT IS FAR FROM CUT-AND-DRIED.

OH. THIS IS SORT OF HARD.

IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, BORING COULD MEAN HAVING MORE OF AN IMPACT THAN SOMETHING THAT IS AVERAGE.

TO BE BLUNT, AVERAGE COULD BE INTERPRETED AS BEING AMBIVALENT TOWARD THE ORIGINAL WORK. IN A WAY, IT HAS FAILED TO IMPACT THE READER.

OH. COME TO THINK OF IT, I'VE ONLY BEEN WRITING GUY CHARACTERS.

THE MAIN THING IS THAT YOU INTRODUCE SOME FEMALE CHARACTERS.

WOW. YOU GUYS SEEM TO HAVE, UH, SUDDENLY FORMED YOUR OWN TEAM.

HOWEVER, WE HAVE THOUGHT OF A WAY TO OVERCOME THIS PROBLEM.

THAT SORT OF THING HAPPENS OFTEN.

YES.

CAFÉ

ULP

THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD IGNORE THEM OUTRIGHT.

HOWEVER...

I WOULDN'T PAY TOO MUCH MIND TO SUCH TALK. READERS ARE AN OPINIONATED BUNCH.

OH...

WHICH OF THESE STORY DEVELOPMENTS WOULD YOU FIND MOST INTERESTING? A) KATCHAN COMES INTO HIS OWN, B) KATCHAN LEAVES THE THUG LIFE BEHIND HIM AND SETS HIS SIGHTS ON ACADEMIA, C) KATCHAN BECOMES A BROKEN, ALCOHOLIC SHELL OF A MAN.

THE QUESTION WAS AS FOLLOWS...

AN-OTHER ONE?

WE HAVE TAKEN A POLL ON THIS AS WELL.

WAIT A MINUTE. DON'T YOU THINK THIS IS A LITTLE STRANGE?

YOU SEE? IT'S EASY, RIGHT?!

WRITE THIS AND YOU'LL TOTALLY GET POPULAR!

THAT'S WHAT YOUR READERS ARE AFTER.

A) KATCHAN COMES INTO HIS OWN.

THE MOST POPULAR CHOICE WAS...

IF I JUST WRITE WHAT THE READERS WANT, IT'LL STOP BEING MINE!

AFTER ALL, THIS IS **MY** STORY.

READERS DON'T TEND TO BE REALISTS. I'M AFRAID THE STORY WILL END UP BEING TOO SIMPLISTIC.

BUT THERE'S A BIGGER PROBLEM. I CAN WRITE WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT, BUT WILL IT BE ANY **GOOD**?

. . . . . .

STILL...IF IT MEANS BEING POPULAR, I COULD ALWAYS OVERLOOK THAT FACT.

HOW ABOUT INTRODUCING SOME COMEDY INTO THE STORY?

DO YOU HAVE ANOTH-ER IDEA?

BUT GETTING INSIDE A WOMAN'S HEAD... IT'LL BE TOUGH.

THIS IS NO TIME TO WORRY ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT!

BUT KATCHAN ISN'T POPULAR WITH THE GIRLS.

FOR EXAMPLE, YOU COULD HAVE A LOVE INTEREST FOR KATCHAN.

HUH? BUT I THINK THAT WOULD BE THE EASIEST WAY TO GO!

NAH, FORGET IT.

COM-EDY?

IT REQUIRES A FINELY HONED COMEDIC SENSE.

JOKE-TELLING IS FAR MORE COMPLICATED THAN YOU THINK.

YEAH, BUT PLAYING IT SAFE CAN BE HARD! HOW SAFE IS SAFE? WHAT'S THE STANDARD?

I THINK YOU WOULD DO WELL TO PLAY THINGS SAFE AND ADHERE TO A MORE TRADITIONAL FORM OF STORY-TELLING.

OH. I GUESS I'M NEITHER.

THAT, OR A PENCHANT FOR TOSSING PLOT AND STORYLINE COMPLETELY OUT THE WINDOW. THOSE ARE THE ONLY TYPES OF PEOPLE WHO DO COMEDY.

ACCORDING TO THE SURVEY, IT'S NOT THAT THE STORY HAS BECOME UNINTERESTING: THE MAIN COMPLAINT IS THAT KATCHAN CAME INTO HIS OWN FAR TOO EASILY, LACKING A SENSE OF REALISM.

WHAT?!

YOUR POPU-LARITY HAS SLIPPED.

BUT WITHOUT THE PAIN AND SADNESS THAT A CHARACTER'S DEATH BRINGS, THE STORY WON'T HAVE ANY SENSE OF DEVELOPMENT. ALSO, A DEATH GOES COUNTER TO THE READERS' EXPECTATIONS, WHICH ACTUALLY ADDS A NEW LEVEL OF INTEREST.

FOR EXAMPLE, READERS HAVE NO PROBLEM SAYING THINGS LIKE, "DON'T KILL THAT CHARACTER! I LIKE HIM!"

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT THIS?!

JUST CALM DOWN.

STILL, IT'S WEIRD. WE DID WHAT THEY WANTED, SO WHY ARE THEY COMPLAINING ABOUT IT? BUNCH OF FICKLE BASTARDS.

DAMMIT, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I SAID!

HUH?

HOWEVER, THESE ARE LITTLE MORE THAN YOUR OWN IDEALS. THE REALITY IS FAR DIFFERENT.

HM. I UNDERSTAND COMPLETELY.

WE HAVE SOME RATHER UNFORTUNATE NEWS, MAEDA-KUN.

. . . . . .

A FEW DAYS LATER

UH, THE OTHER MAGAZINES?

IT SEEMS YOU AREN'T AWARE OF THIS, SO I MAY AS WELL TELL YOU--ALL THE OTHER MAGAZINES ARE DOING IT, TOO.

SIMPLY PUT, POPULARITY TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER ALL ELSE! AND BECOMING POPULAR TAKES RESEARCH.

H U H ?

IT'S BEEN CAN-CELLED.

IT'S DIFFICULT TO SAY THIS, BUT IT'S IMPORTANT. PLEASE BRACE YOURSELF. ABOUT THAT STORY OF YOURS...

THE RESULTS ARE IN.

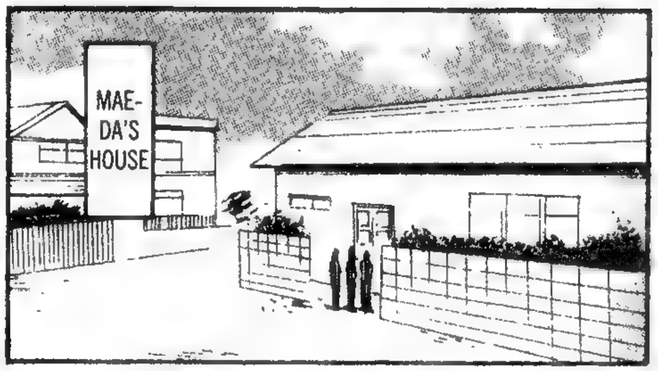
WELL? WHAT DOES THE SURVEY SAY?

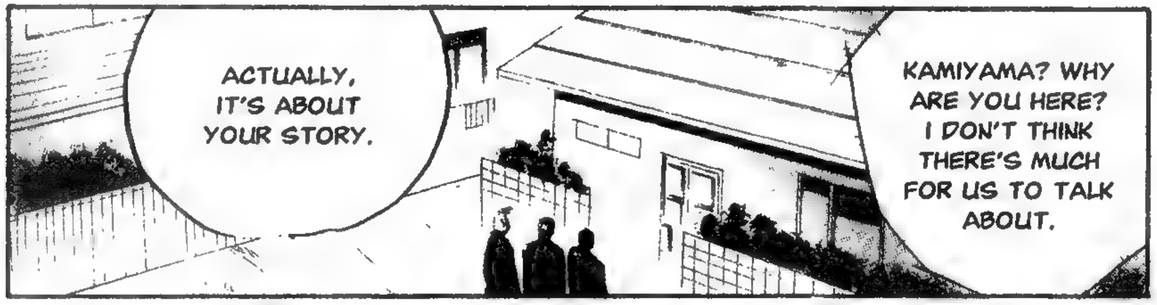
ONE WEEK LATER

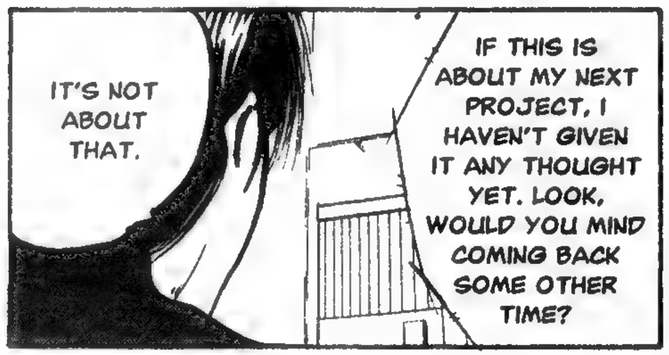
OK, FINE. IF IT'LL MAKE ME POPULAR, I'LL DO IT.

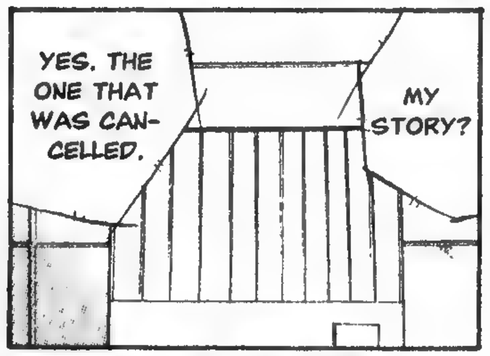
LISTEN, WE'RE ONLY DOING THIS WITH YOUR BEST INTERESTS IN MIND. TRUST US.

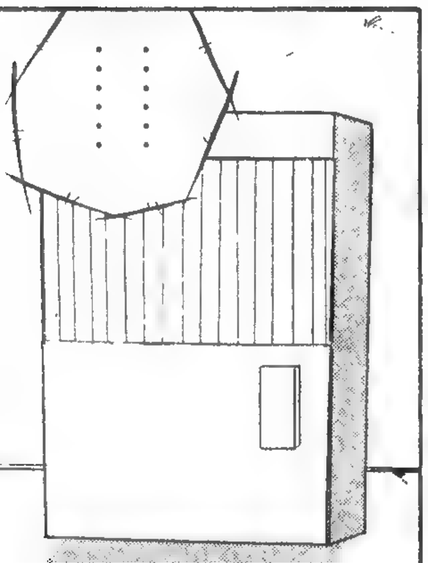
CHAPTER 233: **NEED YOUR LOVE**

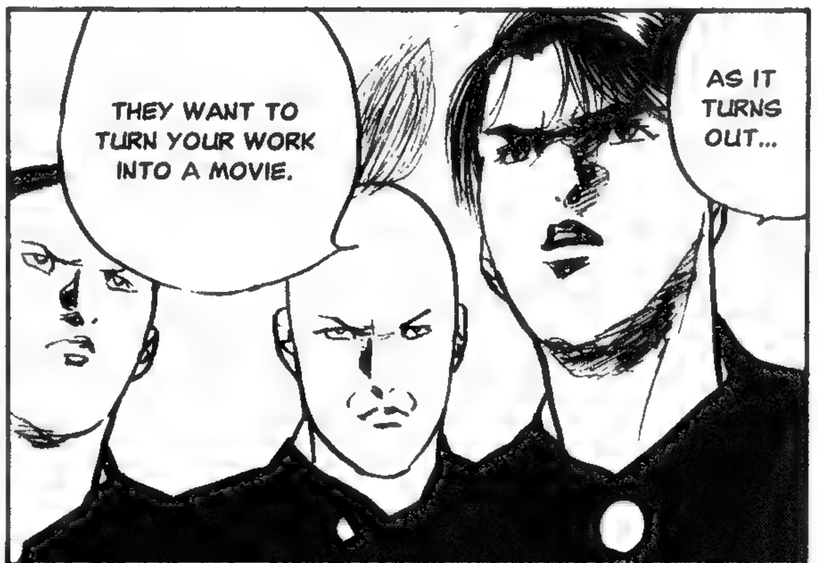


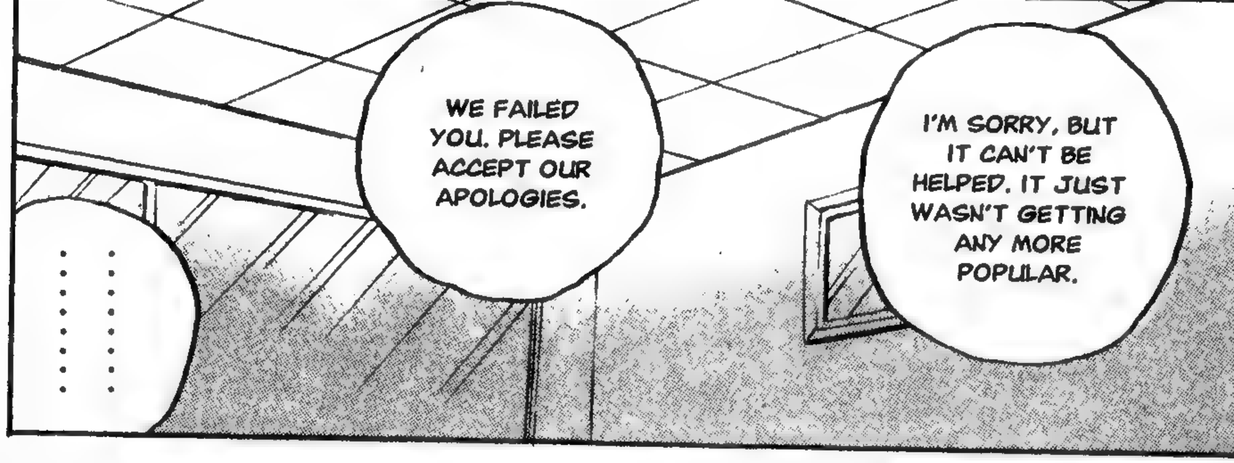


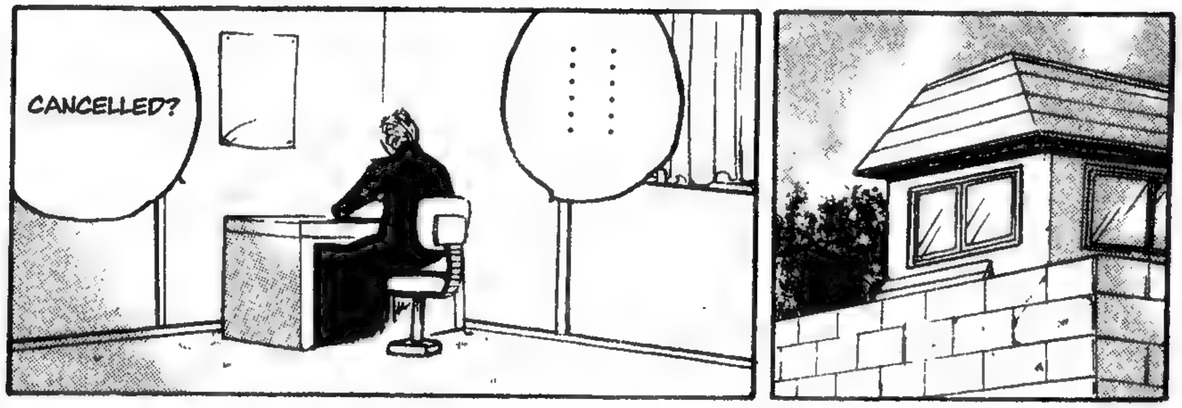

IT'S NOT ABOUT THAT.
IF THIS IS ABOUT MY NEXT PROJECT, I HAVEN'T GIVEN IT ANY THOUGHT YET. LOOK, WOULD YOU MIND COMING BACK SOME OTHER TIME?

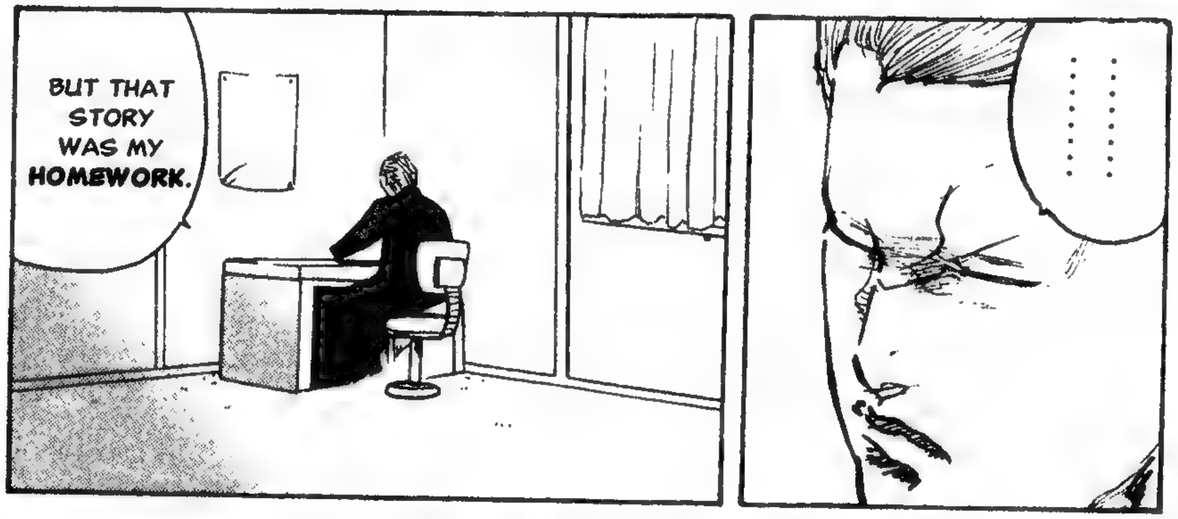












THIS MANGA ISN'T VERY POPULAR IN READER SURVEYS EITHER.

I'LL SAY THIS WHILE I HAVE THE CHANCE-- I DON'T SEE THERE BEING A WHOLE LOT OF TRUST BETWEEN US.

SLRRP

IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TO GET YOU SINGING A DIFFERENT TUNE, DOES IT?

THANK YOU.

TOK

TOK

SO, HAS A PLOT BEEN WORKED OUT FOR THE MOVIE YET?

FINE, I GET IT. I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.

THE FAULT IS ENTIRELY OURS. PLEASE, ISN'T THERE SOME WAY YOU CAN CONTINUE?

BUT LAST WEEK...

A MOVIE?

YES, A PLOT! THE BASIC STORY OF THE FILM. YOU HAVE A PROPOSAL, RIGHT? YOU KNOW, THE THING THAT GETS SHOWN TO BACKERS AND THE AUTHOR.

PLOT?

HMPH! YOU GUYS ARE PRETTY DAMN SELF-SERVING.

WHAT WITH THIS MOVIE ADAPTATION AND ALL, WE WERE HOPING YOU'D FORGET ABOUT THAT AND CONTINUE ON FOR A WHILE LONGER.

AH. YES, ABOUT THAT...

MY STORY GOT CANCELLED.

IF IT GETS CHANGED IN A GOOD WAY, GOOD. BUT IF IT GOES AGAINST THE VISION OF THE AUTHOR, THAT CAN BE A LITTLE BOTHERSOME.

WHEN SOMETHING GETS ADAPTED INTO A FILM, IT'S GOING TO BE DIFFERENT FROM THE ORIGINAL WORK.

I'M SURE THERE ARE MANY THINGS YOU WISH TO SAY, SOME OF THEM CRITICISMS DIRECTED AT US. BUT SUCH BICKERING WOULD FORESTALL THE OPPORTUNITY THAT THIS FILM REPRESENTS.

HGRH...

YOU SEE? YOUR ATTITUDE IS SOMEWHAT OVERBEARING. SUCH CHANGES ARE COMMON IN THOSE WHO SUDDENLY BECOME POPULAR.

WHAT?!

YOU SEEM TO HAVE GOTTEN SORT OF FULL OF YOURSELF.

Yes.

That's right.

HM?

UM, MAEDA? DO YOU MIND?

NOW THEN, THE DIRECTOR HAS ALREADY SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO MEET YOU RIGHT AWAY.

YEAH...I'M SORRY. I'LL TRY TO KEEP A BETTER ATTITUDE.

THIS PROJECT IS CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION. LET US NOT WASTE TIME WITH NEEDLESS FEUDING.

LOOK, I'M NOT TRYIN' TO SAY THIS IN A BAD WAY OR ANYTHING...

YOU PROBABLY JUST HAVEN'T NOTICED.

I-I DON'T THINK I'M ANY DIFFERENT FROM HOW I'VE ALWAYS BEEN.

. . . . . .

THIS HAS GONE FORWARD A LOT MORE THAN YOU'D THINK. YOU COULD EVEN ASK HIM ABOUT THE PLOT.

TH-THE DIRECTOR?! WHO IS HE?

YOU WERE THE ONES WHO CAME TO ME ABOUT THE MOVIE! I'M JUST TRYING TO EXAMINE THE IDEA A LITTLE MORE!

HEY, DAMMIT! QUIT FALSELY ACCUSING ME OF STUFF!

BUT A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE TURNED ROTTEN THAT WAY.

VERY WELL. LET'S GO.

OK. I'LL MEET HIM.

THEN FORGET IT! I'M NOT GOING TO WRITE ANYMORE!

IF YOU'RE GOING TO KEEP GOING ON AND COMPLAINING...

I, UH, THAT IS...

DON'T TELL ME YOU THOUGHT WE'D BEEN TALKING TO AN ACTUAL MOVIE COMPANY!

MAEDA...

HUH?

.....

Cromartie High School Film Club

UH, Y-YEAH.

Looks like things are back to normal.

EVEN IF IT IS BEING DONE BY THE SCHOOL FILM CLUB.

MAEDA, YOUR WORK IS GOING TO BE TURNED INTO A FILM. I THINK THAT IS A TREMENDOUS ACHIEVEMENT.

THAT'S WHY WE ARE HERE, YES? TO MEET THE GENTLEMAN FROM THE FILM CLUB WHO WILL BE DIRECTING THE ADAPTATION OF YOUR WORK.

UM, THE FILM CLUB?

NAH, I'M THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR.

ARE YOU THE DIRECTOR?

AH!

ool

CHAK

DISTRIBUTION? THEATRICAL RUNS? WHAT THE HELL?

YOU KNOW, DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES AND THEATRICAL RUNS.

I...JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE. WHEN YOU SAID IT WAS BEING MADE INTO A FILM, I IMAGINED...

THE GROUNDS, YOU SAY?

THE DIRECTOR'S GETTING READY TO SHOOT A SCENE. HE'S OUT ON THE SCHOOL GROUNDS.

UH...

WHAT WAS IT THAT YOU WANTED TO SAY?

THAT'S VERY GRACIOUS. MAEDA?

ONCE WE START FILMING, IT'LL BE TOO LATE.

IF THERE'S ANYTHING SPECIFIC YOU'D LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN WITH THE FILM, NOW'S YOUR CHANCE TO LET ME KNOW.

HM?

SIR?

I'M SORRY?

EXCEL-LENT!

UH, NOTHING IMPORTANT.

Or, rather, it's stopped being important.

WE'VE BROUGHT MAEDA-KUN, THE AUTHOR.

NOT AT ALL.

OH, IT'S YOU ALL! THANKS VERY MUCH FOR COMING OUT!

BUT WHAT A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T GET IS THAT WE'RE DEALING WITH TWO DIFFERENT MEDIA, WHICH MEANS THERE'LL BE DIFFERENCES IN PRESENTATION. WE'RE JUST TRYING TO CAPITALIZE ON THE AUTHOR'S NAME AND POPULARITY TO MAKE OUR FILMS. THAT'S ALL.

AUTHORS ARE USUALLY PRETTY VOCAL--CHARACTER X JUST HAS TO BE PLAYED BY SO-AND-SO, OR WHEN THE ACTOR COMES OUT, THEY'LL SAY HE DOESN'T FIT THE IMAGE. IT'S A DIFFICULT PROCESS.

YOU'RE MAEDA, HUH?

NICE TO MEET YOU.

I TELL YOU, THAT'S A LOAD OFF MY MIND.

VERY WELL. THANKS VERY MUCH!

LOOK, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT ALL THIS STUFF, SO DO WHATEVER YOU WANT. I DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT CASTING.

I HAD A FEELING YOU'D LIKE THOSE.

I ESPECIALLY LIKE THE SCENES WITH KATCHAN. BRILLIANT!

YOU HONOR ME.

YOU'VE WRITTEN A GREAT PIECE OF WORK! IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE SOMETHING'S MADE ME WANT TO PICK UP THE OLD MEGAPHONE AGAIN.

HUH?

AFTER ALL, YOU CAN'T ACT, CAN YOU?

GETTING YOU TO PLAY YOURSELF WOULD BE IDEAL, BUT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.

OF COURSE.

SO THIS MAN WAS CHOSEN FOR WHAT HE CAN BRING TO THE ROLE.

WHEN CASTING A FILM, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THE ACTOR'S **PERFORMANCE**. WHETHER OR NOT THEY LOOK LIKE THE CHARACTER COMES SECOND.

WHAT?!

OH. THAT'S MAEDA-KUN, HUH?

BY THE WAY, THIS IS THE GUY WHO'LL BE PLAYING YOU.

MAEDA

THAT'S A PRETTY IMPORTANT ROLE!

ONLY HE CAN DO?

MUNCH

MUNCH

THERE'S A CERTAIN SCENE IN THIS FILM THAT ONLY HE CAN DO.

YEAH, BUT... COME ON! THIS GUY IS JUST TOO DIFFERENT!

HEY, WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA? YOU JUST BARELY GOT THROUGH SAYIN' YOU WOULDN'T SAY THINGS LIKE THAT!

H-HOLD ON JUST A MINUTE! I GET THE FEELING THIS GUY DOESN'T REALLY FIT THE IMAGE!

SORRY FOR THE WAIT.

OK, I'LL LET YOU GUYS SEE IT.

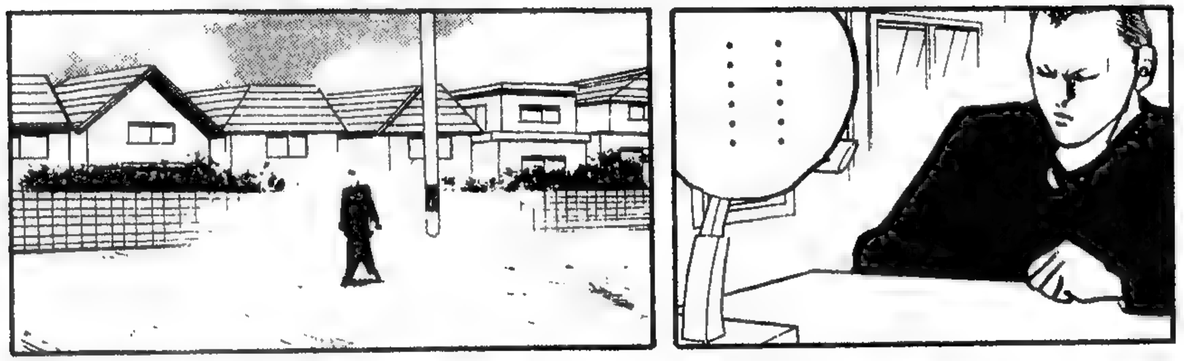
IT'S CERTAINLY INTRIGUING. PLEASE, LET US SEE THIS SCENE!

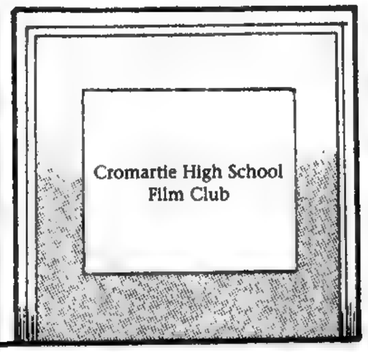
THE FACT THAT YOU'RE COMPLAINING THIS MAN DOESN'T LOOK LIKE YOU IS PROOF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW MOVIES WORK.

HUH?

I CAN SEE YOU HAVE LITTLE EXPERIENCE WITH FILM, MAEDA-SAN.

CHAPTER 234: **I'M AN EGGMAN**





YOU SHOULD GIVE IT UP, MAEDA.
THERE'S NO WAY TO BEAT A PRO AT HIS OWN GAME!
MUNCH
MUNCH
I GET IT! THERE'S NO WAY ANYONE ELSE COULD PULL THIS OFF!

NO. BUT IT'S PRETTY INCREDIBLE.

IF THE SCENE'S FOR A TOTALLY DIFFERENT FILM, WHY THE HECK IS HE STILL PLAYING MAEDA?! THAT GOES BEYOND NONSENSICAL--IT'S JUST PLAIN STUPID!

HAVING TO EAT 40 HARDBOILED EGGS IN 10 MINUTES WAS THE ONLY REASON THAT FATASS GOT THE PART!

BUT THAT ONE SCENE IS REALLY BUGGING ME. I WAS HOPING YOU COULD EXPLAIN WHAT LED TO IT COMING ABOUT.

I DON'T WANT TO START COMPLAINING ABOUT THIS AND THAT AFTER I SAID TO GO AHEAD AND DO WHATEVER YOU WANT...

WHAT KIND OF FILM NEEDS A SCENE OF SOMEONE EATING HARDBOILED EGGS?

THERE ARE A TON OF THINGS I WANT TO TELL THAT DIRECTOR! BUT PUTTING THAT ASIDE FOR A MINUTE...

REALLY? SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED?

THAT WASN'T FOR YOUR FILM--IT WAS FOR A DIFFERENT ONE. I SORT OF GOT THE TWO CONFUSED WHEN I CAST HIM.

OH, THAT. I REALLY HAVE TO APOLOGIZE.

YEAH.

THE WHOLE THING IS JUST RIDICULOUS.

I THOUGHT IT WAS WEIRD, TOO.

YEAH, THAT'S A PRETTY BIG SLIP-UP.

I SAY WE GO ASK THE DIRECTOR!

SO WHAT THE HECK MOVIE IS IT?

ME, TOO. I'M A PRETTY BIG MOVIEGOER, BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN A FILM WHERE SOMEONE HAD TO EAT 40 HARDBOILED EGGS IN 10 MINUTES.

STILL, WHAT SORT OF MOVIE HAS A SCENE ABOUT HARDBOILED EGGS? IT'S GOTTEN ME REALLY CURIOUS.

. . . . . .

WELL, I'M HAPPY WE GOT THAT SORTED OUT.

I HAVE TO TELL YOU, HEARING THAT IS A LOAD OFF MY MIND. IT'S REALLY BEEN BUGGING ME.

BUT A DIFFERENT FILM?! WHAT THE HELL?

I SURE AM GLAD.

. . . . . .

YEAH! DAMN, WHERE'D WE BE WITHOUT THE FILMS THAT MOVE AND INSPIRE US?!

IT'S GOTTA BE SOME KIND OF, LIKE, SWEEPING EMO-TIONAL DRAMA.

HEY, WHAT DO YOU SAY WE TRY TO IMAGINE WHAT KIND OF FILM IT'LL BE?

WHAT?! HE'S OUT FILMING ON LOCATION?

Cromartie High School Film Club

HIS FAMILY DOESN'T GIVE HIM ANY GRIEF ABOUT LEAVING--THEY WELCOME HIM BACK WITH OPEN ARMS.

THE SETTING IS THE COUNTRYSIDE. A GUY NAMED GENZO HAS MOVED BACK FROM TOKYO, HIS DREAMS SHATTERED.

I BET IT GOES SOME-THING LIKE THIS...

AH! I KNEW IT!

HE SAID IT WAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH HARDBOILED EGGS.

I GET THE FEELING THAT'S NOT SOMETHING A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SHOULD BE DOING...

THAT'S RIGHT. HE'LL BE GONE FOR ABOUT 10 DAYS.

HE COULDN'T NOT EAT THEM.

HARDBOILED EGGS WERE HIS MOM'S SPECIALTY.

M-MOM...

I'VE MADE SEVERAL HARDBOILED EGGS FOR YOU.

GENZO.

COULDN'T TELL YOU. YOU'D HAVE TO ASK THE DIRECTOR.

BY THE WAY, WHAT KIND OF FILM IS THIS HARDBOILED-EGG MOVIE?

YES, MA'AM.

I HAVE A LOT TO DO TODAY, AND I NEED TO FINISH CLEANING UP SOON. I WANT YOU TO EAT ALL THOSE EGGS IN UNDER 10 MINUTES.

OK.

BE SURE YOU DON'T LEAVE A SINGLE ONE.

ALSO, HIS MOM WAS VERY STRICT.

WE'VE GOTTA WAIT A WHOLE MONTH?!

IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S SCREENING NEXT MONTH.

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THE EGGS?!

THIS IS TOTALLY KILLIN' ME!

WAIT A MINUTE. A MOVIE ABOUT EATING HARDBOILED EGGS OVERSEAS?

A MOVIE ABOUT EATING HARDBOILED EGGS OVERSEAS...

YOU CAN'T EAT 'EM IN JAPAN, HUH? MAN, THIS IS HARD.

MUNCH

MUNCH

Stopwatch

MUNCH

MUNCH

REALLY?!

OK, I'VE THOUGHT OF SOMETHING.

THAT'S WHY THIS IS SO HARD, IDIOT!

THERE IS NO MOVIE LIKE THAT!

YOU GAVE IT YOUR ALL. NOW DO THE SAME IN LIFE.

THANK YOU, MOM.

I DID IT. I ATE THEM IN UNDER 10 MINUTES.

HM. NINE MINUTES, 15 SECONDS.

I ATE THEM ALL, MOM!

YES!

. . . . . .

UH...

I CAN'T EVEN TELL WHAT KIND OF STORY IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE!

HUH. I CAN'T TELL IF THAT'S EMOTIONAL OR NOT.

. . . . . .

WHAT THE HELL KIND OF STORY IS THAT?!

INSTEAD OF BEING A STORY ABOUT EATING HARDBOILED EGGS, IT TURNED INTO A STORY ABOUT **PEELING** HARDBOILED EGGS.

HUH? WHAT HAPPENED?

NO, FORGET IT.

IT'S GOTTA HAVE A SCENE THAT TAKES PLACE OVERSEAS.

SO...

YEAH. ALL YOU'D HAVE TO DO IS FILM SOMEONE EATIN' EGGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

ANYWAY, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO GO SHOOTING OVERSEAS TO DO A STORY LIKE THAT.

GEORGE'S MOM WAS VERY STRICT.

YES, MA'AM.

AND I'M IN A HURRY, SO DO IT IN UNDER 10 MINUTES.

OK.

PEEL THOSE HARDBOILED EGGS THERE FOR ME, WOULD YOU?

CRK

パキ

CRK

パキ

Stopwatch

CRK

パキ

CRK

パキ

LEAVE IT TO ME, MOM!

NOW ADD THE MAYON-NAISE.

I DID IT! I PEELED THEM IN UNDER 10 MINUTES!

HM. NINE MINUTES, 17 SECONDS.

I'VE PEELED THEM ALL, MOM!

YES!

THAT DIDN'T EVEN HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH EATING EGGS!

THAT OTHER STORY WAS SET IN JAPAN, BUT MINE TAKES PLACE OVERSEAS. THEY'RE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.

NO IT ISN'T.

THAT'S THE SAME FRICKIN' STORY!

OK, THIS IS WHAT I'D IMAGINED...

YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW?

YEAH! COME ON, TELL US WHAT IT'S ABOUT!

HOLD ON. NOW I'M MORE INTERESTED IN THIS PEELING STORY.

HIS FAMILY DOESN'T SCOLD HIM FOR LEAVING--THEY WELCOME HIM BACK WITH OPEN ARMS.

THE SETTING IS NEVADA IN THE UNITED STATES. A MAN NAMED GEORGE HAS MOVED BACK FROM LOS ANGELES, HIS DREAMS SHATTERED.

M-MOM...

I'M GOING TO MAKE SOME EGG SALAD SANDWICHES FOR YOU.

GEORGE.

YOU'VE ASKED ME TO HELP YOU MAKE THEM...

MOM, YOU MUST HAVE A LOT TO DO.

HE COULDN'T NOT EAT THEM.

EGG SALAD SANDWICHES WERE HIS MOM'S SPECIALTY.

The Wandering Knight

EVEN KNOWIN' THAT BEFOREHAND, IT STILL DIDN'T MAKE A LOT OF SENSE.

OH. SORRY.

I SAID AT THE BEGINNING IT WAS ABOUT **PEELING** EGGS! AND I ONLY TOLD IT JUST NOW BECAUSE YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO HEAR IT!

. . . . . .

MUNCH

MUNCH

MUNCH

MUNCH

ONE MONTH LATER

YEAH, WE'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE PREMIERE NEXT MONTH.

ANYWAY, WE'LL NEVER GET ANYWHERE TRYING TO IMAGINE THE STORY.

SCREENING OF THE CROMARTIE HIGH FILM CLUB

I'VE WAITED A LONG TIME FOR THIS DAY!

FINALLY! I WONDER WHAT KIND OF FILM IT'LL BE.

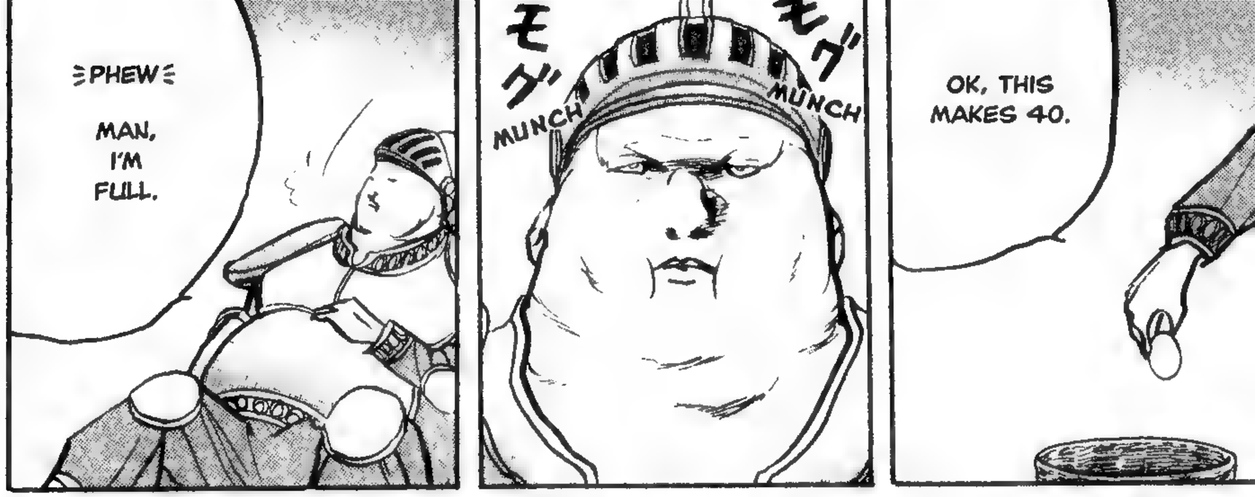
THIS IS IT.

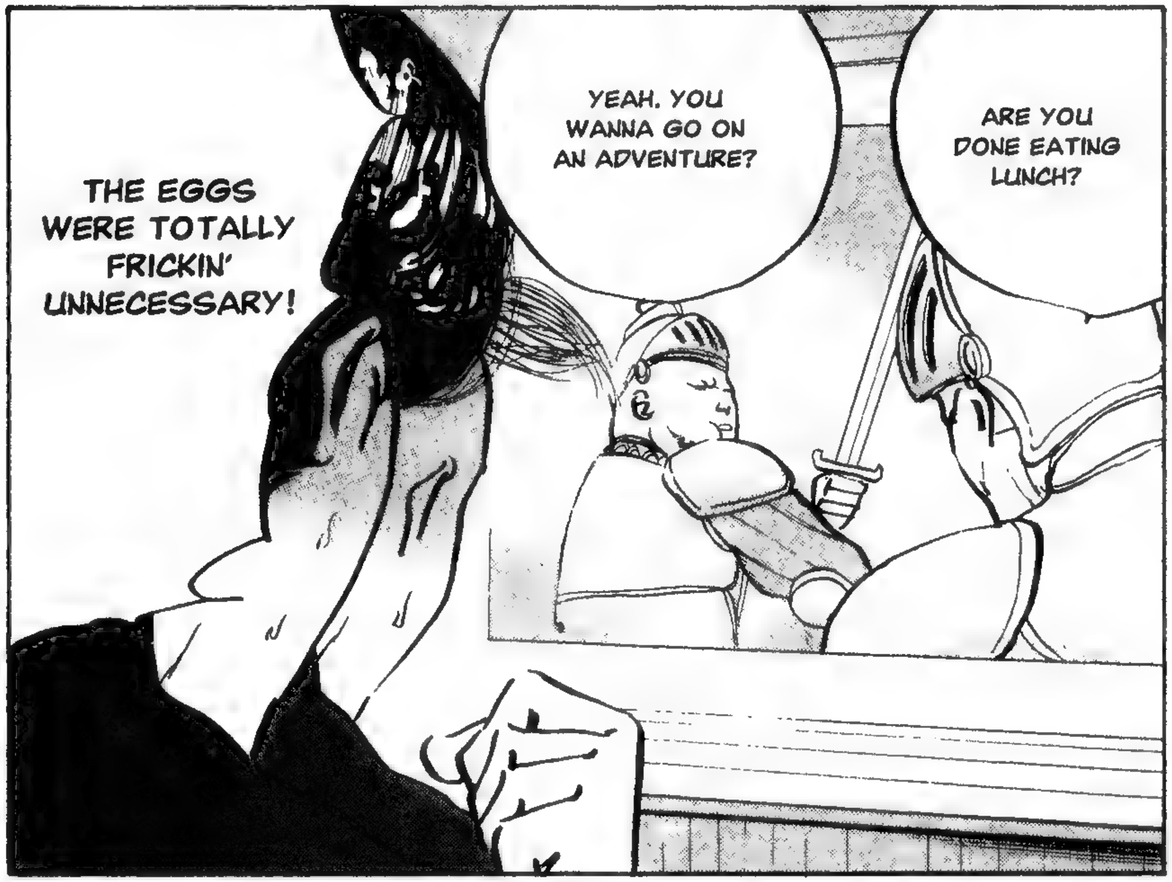
THE DIRECTOR

CHARACTER INTRODUCTION

Director of the Cromartie High School Film Club. Acts and speaks more like a middle-aged man. He seems to be a senior to Kamiyama and the others, which would make him a 2nd- or 3rd-year student.

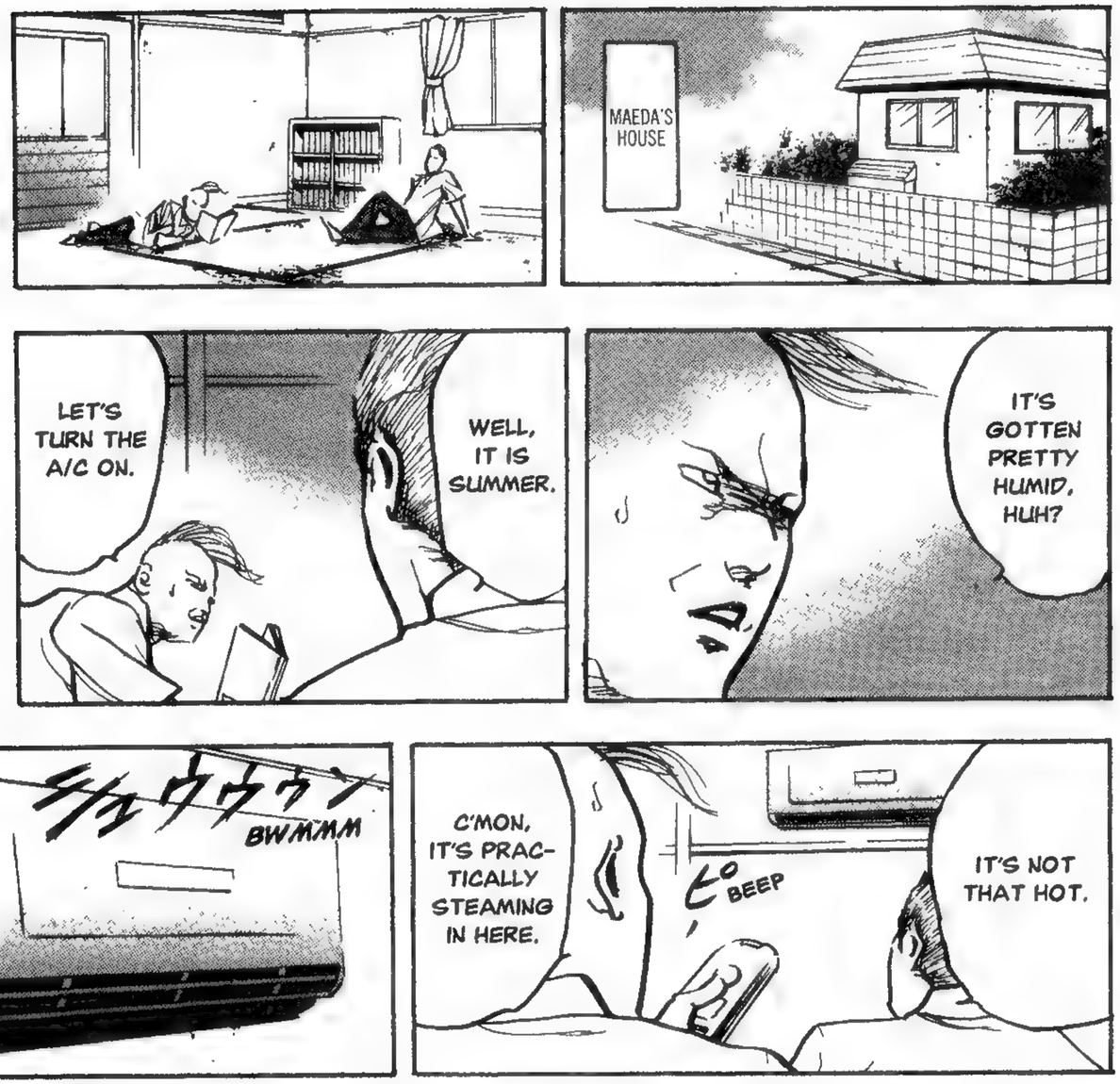
The director is straightforward to the point of being shockingly blunt, admitting outright that directors are "just trying to capitalize on the author's name and popularity to make our films." This statement is probably something that everyone has thought at one time or another, but refrained from actually *saying* for fear of getting the listener quite angry. It's also probably something that would incite a thigh-slapping cry of "You got that right!" from anyone working in the industry. I originally intended to follow the line with, "The popularity of the original manga also brings in sponsors, and that means more money," but had to cut it because it was getting too long. The fact that this guy is *too* frank is what makes him cool. He's not very good at making movies, though. (LOL)





I GUESS THAT WAS ONE CONTINUOUS SCENE.

CHAPTER 235: **HOUSE ON FIRE**



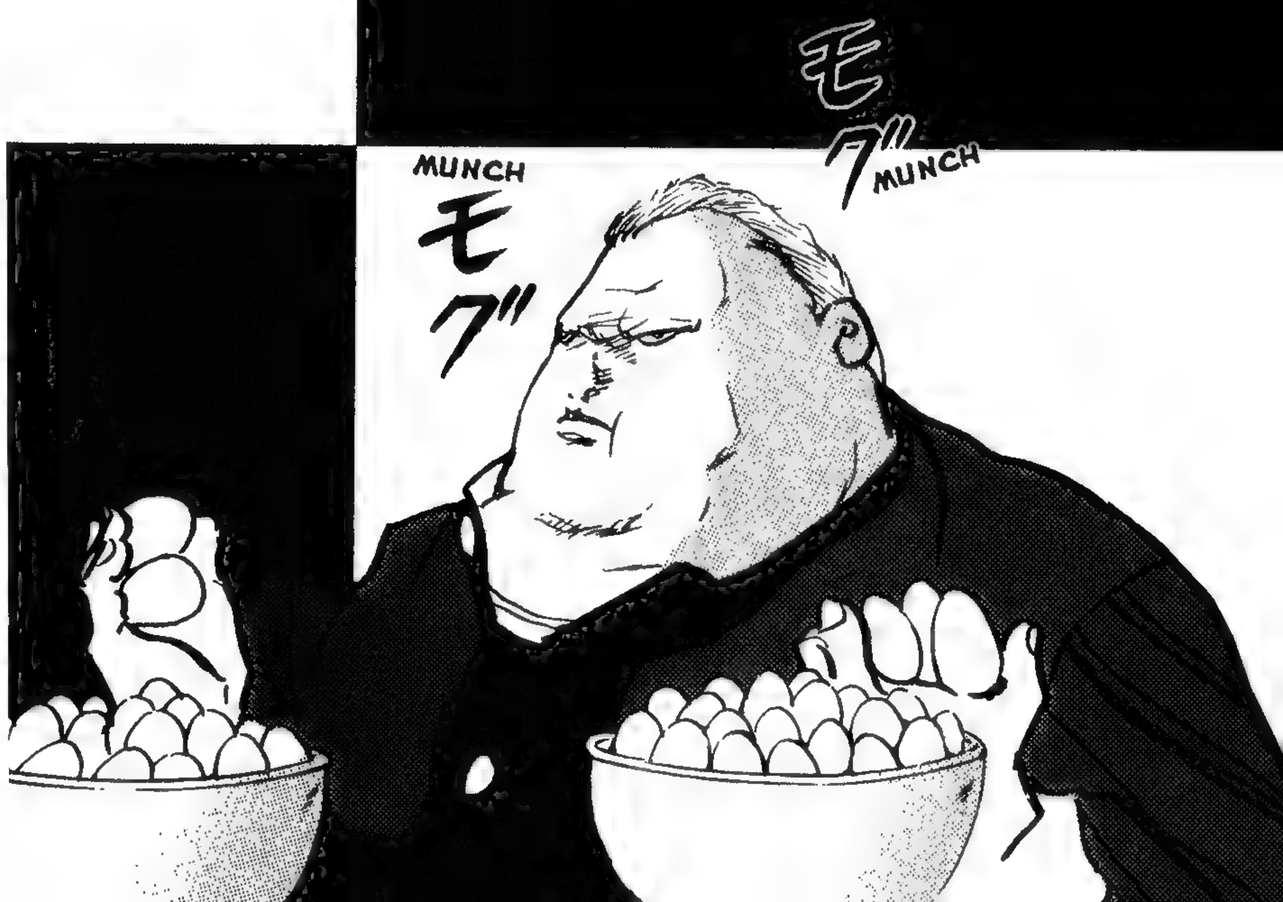
CHARACTER INTRODUCTION

THE GUY WHO PLAYS MAEDA

This extremely obese individual is a member of the Cromartie High School Film Club, and has the special talent of being able to eat a lot of hardboiled eggs. The idea that someone who can eat a lot would also be fat is rather straightforward and easy to understand.

At left, this person is credited as "the guy who plays Maeda," but actually he's nothing of the sort. (LOL) Still, if you look closely, his face kind of looks like Maeda's. Maybe. Anyway, he plays the lead role in *The Wandering Knight* (what kind of title is that anyway?), the latest film from the director of the Cromartie High School Film Club. I'm not too sure about that bit character referring to this guy as a "brave hero."

The extent of this man's acting abilities remains to be seen. But I'd like him to watch his cholesterol levels.



Comfortable
A/C on Heavy clothes
A/C on Naked
Cold
Hot
A/C on Light clothes
A/C off Light clothes
A/C off Heavy clothes
Uncomfortable
IT'S LIKE THIS.
UH, HAYASHIDA?
ONE HOUR LATER
I CAN SEE YOUR POINT, BUT THERE'S JUST ONE THING...
OK, FINE. I THINK I GET IT.
There's no need to draw a chart.
TO SUMMARIZE, WEARING A SWEATSHIRT WITH THE A/C ON IS THE BEST WAY TO GO.
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU HAVE A SWEATSHIRT ON FOR?!
BWMM
YEAH?
AND WHEN YOU'RE IN YOUR OWN HOUSE, YOU'RE FREE TO PUT ON THE A/C AND WEAR SWEATSHIRTS ALL YOU LIKE. BUT DON'T YOU THINK IT'S A LITTLE RUDE TO BE DOING THAT IN SOMEONE ELSE'S HOUSE?
YEAH. AND?
THIS IS MY HOUSE! THAT MEANS I HAVE TO PAY THE ELECTRIC BILL. YOU UNDERSTAND THAT, RIGHT?
WHAT ARE YOU TURNING IT OFF FOR? YOU JUST DON'T GET IT, DO YOU?
BEEP
JEEZ. Frickin' moron.
IF YOU'RE COLD, WHY DON'T YOU JUST TURN THE A/C OFF? WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?!
I THINK YOU NEED TO START LOOKING AT THINGS FROM THE OTHER GUY'S PERSPECTIVE.
YOU'RE NOT THE ONE WHO SHOULD BE SAYING THAT, DAMMIT! I AM!
COME ON, IT'S JUST ELECTRICITY. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
FINE, I'LL SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU WITH A DIAGRAM.
HUH?
WITH THE A/C ON, IT'S COLD. BUT WITH IT OFF, IT'S HOT.

ONE HOUR LATER

FINE. THERE'S NO WAY I'M TURNING THAT HEATER OFF.

RUNNING THE HEATER PROBABLY COSTS MORE THAN THE A/C. BUT DON'T WORRY. YOU WON'T BE HEARING ANY COMPLAINTS FROM ME.

HOLD IT! YOU'RE NOT TURNING THAT OFF!

WHAT DO YOU SAY WE TURN IT OFF?

HNNGH... IT'S REALLY GOTTEN HOT.

FINE BY ME.

REALLY? THEN WHAT DO YOU SAY WE GO TO YOUR HOUSE RIGHT NOW?

NAH, YOU WOULDN'T FIND ME COMPLAINING ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT. I VALUE MY GUESTS.

YOU'D GET MAD IF I DID THE SAME THING AT YOUR HOUSE, WOULDN'T YOU?

HAYA-SHIDA'S HOUSE

THEN IT STAYS ON! YOU'RE FINE WITH THAT, RIGHT?!

NOT AT ALL.

WHAT DID I SAY? YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT THE BILL, AREN'T YOU?!

YEAH, FINE.

BUT THAT FRICKIN' THING STAYS ON!

STILL, IT'S GETTING KINDA HOT. I THINK I'LL TAKE THIS OFF.

OH. YEAH, IT'S SORT OF BEEN ON THE FRITZ LATELY.

B-BP

HUH? IT WON'T COME ON.

IT'S GETTING PRETTY HUMID IN HERE. WHAT DO YOU SAY WE TURN ON THE A/C?

BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER, DOES IT? WHEN ALL'S SAID AND DONE, WHAT YOU'RE REALLY AFTER IS A TEST OF MY GENEROSITY. THIS IS ABOUT SEEING IF I CARE ABOUT THE ELECTRIC BILL, RIGHT?

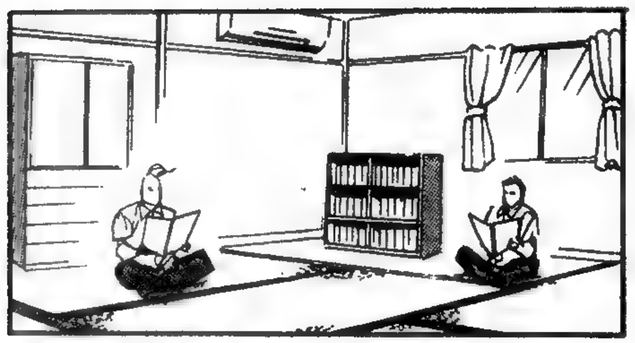
AAGH! GOOD GOD THAT'S HOT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING, MAN?! IT'S SUMMER!

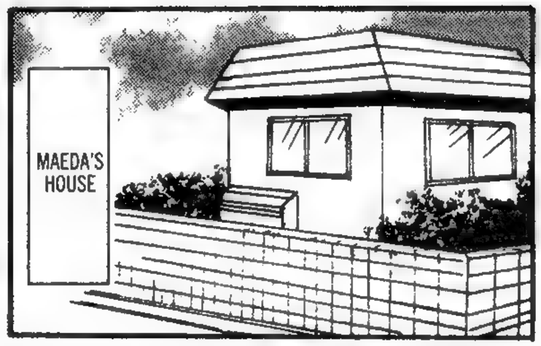
VWORRR

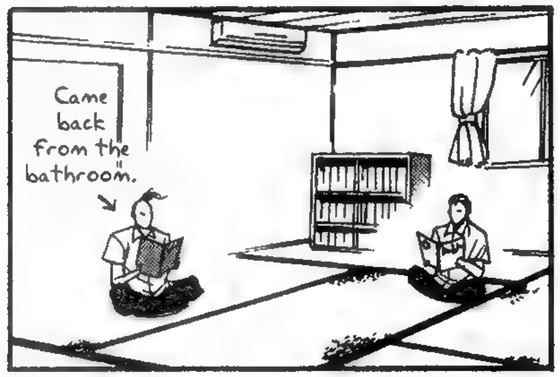
THE HEATER WORKS THOUGH.

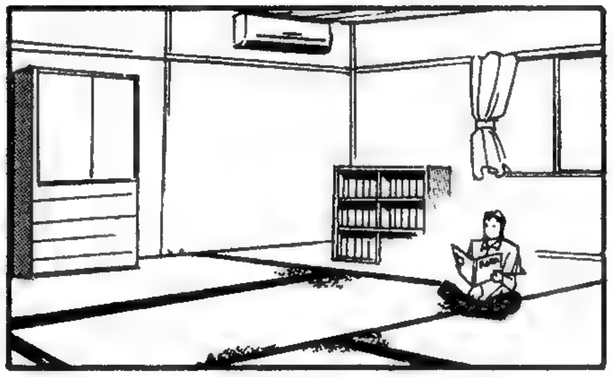
BEEP

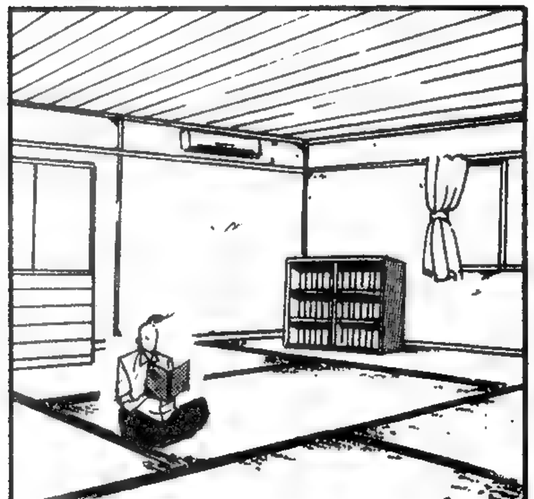
CHAPTER 236: **DOORS**

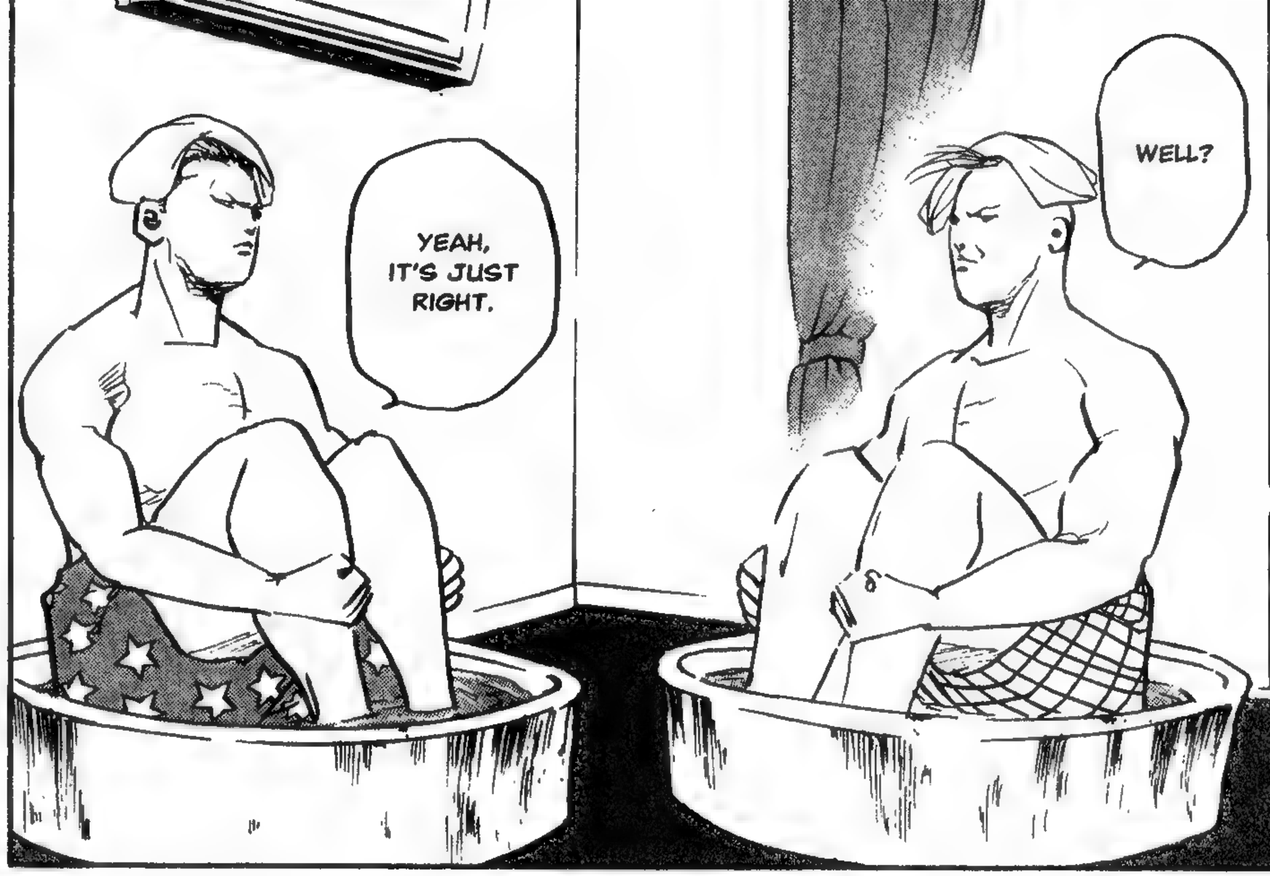


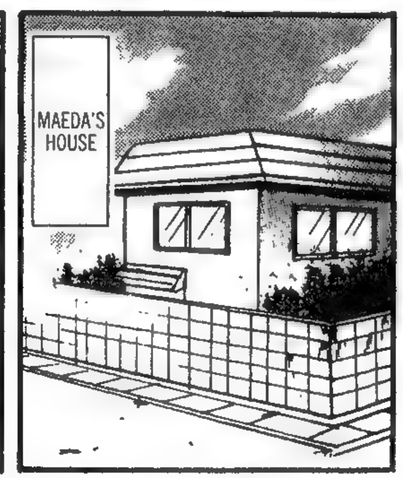












I BET THOSE BOXERS ARE WET.

I GET IT. YOU PUT ALL YOUR FAITH IN THE LIGHT WITHOUT ACTUALLY CHECKING TO SEE IF SOMEONE'S IN THERE. IF THAT LIGHT'S ON, THE TOILET IS OCCUPIED FOR SURE, WITHOUT A SHADOW OF A DOUBT.

WELL, IT'S ONLY NORMAL.

IF THE LIGHT'S ON IN THE BATHROOM, YOU THINK THERE'S DEFINITELY SOMEONE IN THERE?

HM?

DAMMIT, HAYASHIDA!

RATTLE

LET'S GET RIGHT DOWN TO IT--YOU HAVE NO WILL OF YOUR OWN! YOU NEED TO GET A STRONGER SENSE OF SELF!

I-I WOULDN'T GO **THAT** FAR...

YOU'RE THAT WORRIED ABOUT THE ELECTRIC BILL?

SURE, WHATEVER. JUST CALM DOWN.

THE BOOK OF TRIVIA

TURN THE LIGHT OFF WHEN YOU LEAVE THE BATHROOM!

THE ROAD IS SURROUNDED BY FIELDS ON BOTH SIDES. THERE'S NOT A SINGLE OTHER PERSON TO BE SEEN.

IMAGINE YOU'RE IN SOME FARAWAY COUNTRY-SIDE AND WALKING DOWN A LONG ROAD.

IF THE LIGHT'S ON IN THE BATHROOM, IT MAKES YOU THINK THAT SOMEONE'S IN THERE, RIGHT?!

NO, THAT'S NOT IT!

At least, the light in the bathroom.

FINE, I'LL PAY YOUR FRICKIN' BILL.

THE PLACE IS COMPLETELY DESERTED.

YOU LOOK AROUND, BUT THERE'S NO SIGN OF ANY APPROACHING CARS.

AS FATE WOULD HAVE IT, THE LIGHT IS RED.

YOU WANT TO CROSS THAT ROAD. HOWEVER...

OK. SO YOU'RE SAYING...

. . . . . .

LOOK, JUST BECAUSE THE BATHROOM LIGHT'S ON DOESN'T MEAN THERE'S SOMEONE IN THERE. MAYBE SOMEONE JUST FORGOT TO TURN IT OFF.

HUH?

WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS THAT YOU'VE GOT NO REASONING SKILLS.

YEAH, I FIGURED AS MUCH.

I'M A BY-THE-BOOK SORT OF GUY, SO I'D PROBABLY WAIT FOR THE LIGHT.

HMM

WOULD YOU WAIT FOR THE LIGHT TO TURN GREEN, OR WOULD YOU JUST GO?

UH, COME AGAIN?

THAT'S WHY FINDING OUT THE TRUTH IS YOUR OWN RESPONSIBILITY.

YOU STILL DON'T GET IT?! THE SIGNAL IS THE LIGHT IN THE BATHROOM--IN OTHER WORDS, YOU WON'T OPEN THE DOOR UNTIL THE SIGNAL TURNS GREEN.

ANYWAY, WHAT WAS THAT ANALOGY SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

FINE. I'LL DO IT.

TELL YOU WHAT-- I'LL TEST YOU. I'M GOING TO GO TURN THE BATHROOM LIGHT ON, AND YOU USE YOUR POWERS OF REASONING TO OPEN THE DOOR.

BUT OBEYING THE SIGNAL IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, ISN'T IT? I MEAN, IT'S THE LAW! WHAT'S BAD ABOUT THAT?!

YOU KNOW, IF ALL THIS EXPLAINING STILL HASN'T MADE IT CLEAR, THEN THERE'S NO HELPING YOU. JUST PRETEND YOU UNDERSTAND.

UH, THIS IS GETTING HARDER TO UNDER-STAND.

GOOD! I'LL SHOW YOU WHO'S GOT NO REASONING SKILLS.

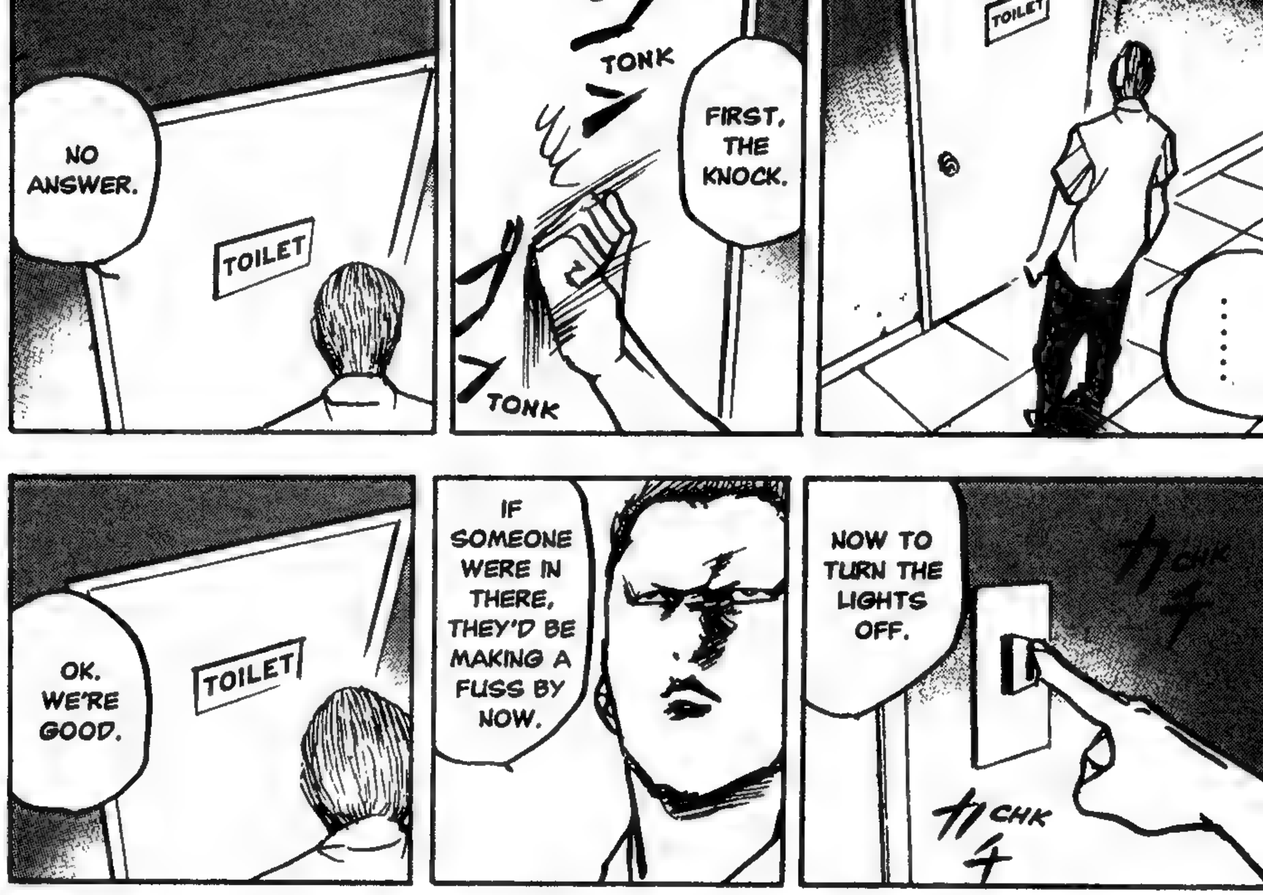
OK, I TURNED IT ON.

AH! YOU'RE RIGHT!

BUT OPENING THE BATHROOM DOOR **ISN'T** A CRIME.

YOU'VE GOT A POINT. IGNORING THE STOPLIGHT IS A CRIME, AND THERE'S NO REASON TO GO AROUND BREAKING THE LAW.

CHAPTER 237: **LIVING ON THE MIDNIGHT**



HAYASHIDA'S PROBABLY BORED OF THIS BY NOW.

. . . . . .

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. YES, THAT'S EXTREMELY EMBARRASSING.

YOU CAN BE MUTTERING AWAY TO YOURSELF WHEN SUDDENLY YOU REALIZE SOME OLD GUY, MAYBE EVEN YOUR DAD, IS STANDING RIGHT THERE.

UH...

AAAAAGH! JEEZ, DON'T SCARE ME LIKE THAT! HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN THERE?!

THAT'S VERY CONSIDERATE OF YOU.

IF YOU HAD SAID SOMETHING, I WOULD HAVE QUIETLY GOTTEN UP AND LEFT. I MEAN, YOU'RE OUR BOSS.

NO, YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING.

I WASN'T TALKING TO MYSELF JUST NOW, WAS I?

*ON FACE: "WORDLESS."

ACTUALLY, I THINK I'M THE ONE WHO'S MORE STARTLED HERE...

IF YOU'RE THERE THEN SAY SOMETHING! I THOUGHT I WAS ALL ALONE!

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

REALLY?! THAT MAKES ME SO HAPPY!

I THINK OUT OF ALL THE OTHERS, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE QUALIFIED TO TAKE MY PLACE SOMEDAY.

BUT INSTEAD OF TALKING TO MYSELF, I WAS HUMMING TO MYSELF.

OH?

YOU KNOW, SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENED TO ME THE OTHER DAY WHEN I WAS RIDING MY BIKE.

STILL, THIS SORT OF THING HAPPENS A LOT, DOESN'T IT? YOU THINK YOU'RE ALONE BUT THERE'S SOMEONE RIGHT NEXT TO YOU.

SORRY. I'LL BE MORE CAREFUL.

SERIOUSLY, I THINK YOU TOOK A COUPLE YEARS OFF MY LIFE. MY HEART'S STILL POUNDING!

RIDING UPON MY BICYCLE.

IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. I'M OUT ALONE...

THIS IS WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE.

IT WAS THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. THERE WASN'T A PERSON TO BE SEEN.

HMM HRMMM HRMMM HM HMMM

IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT AND I'M ALL ALONE. I THINK I SHALL SING A SONG.

. . . . . .

WHICH IS WHEN I NOTICED THERE WAS AN OLD GUY RIGHT NEXT TO ME.

HM-HMM HMMM

I WAS FEELING GOOD AND STARTED HUMMING A TUNE...

HMM HRMMM HRMMM HM HMMM

. . . . . .

HRM HRMM... HM?

I SAW HIM JUST AS I WAS HITTING A REALLY HIGH NOTE. IT WAS PRETTY FRICKIN' EMBARRASSING.

NO. THE OLD GUY IN THE LAST STORY WAS MY FATHER, BUT THIS OLD GUY WAS JUST SOME OLD GUY.

AN OLD GUY? YOUR FATHER?

. . . . . .

WHAT? NO, THAT'S NOT IT.

YES, THAT'S THE SONG. DO YOU KNOW IT?

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFER-ENTLY?

HM. A RATHER PEDESTRIAN APPROACH.

I JUST STARTED CLEARING MY THROAT. I DIDN'T WANT HIM TO THINK I WAS SINGING.

AND? HOW DID YOU TRY TO RECOVER?

IT'S EMBARRASSING BECAUSE YOU'VE LET THE PEOPLE ONBOARD KNOW YOU WERE REALLY TRYING TO MAKE THE TRAIN.

THAT'S THE THING-- WHEN YOUR EYES MEET THOSE OF THE OTHER PASSENGERS, IT'S REALLY EMBARRASSING. YOU'D FEEL A WHOLE LOT HAPPIER IF YOU'D MISSED THE TRAIN OUTRIGHT INSTEAD OF BARELY MISSING IT.

AH, THE OLD "BARELY MISSED IT" SCENARIO. IT'S REALLY QUITE VEXING WHEN YOU COME UP JUST TWO INCHES SHORT, ISN'T IT?

OK, WHAT WOULD YOU DO IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS?

THERE'S A LOT MORE TO IT THAN THAT.

WELL, THIS IS JUST OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD.

OH! YOU WOULD HAVE PRETENDED YOU WERE ON THE PHONE?!

Wow!

I'D ACT LIKE IT WAS NO BIG DEAL AND JUST WALK AWAY CALMLY.

. . . . . .

WELL, IT'S PRETTY STRAIGHT-FORWARD, BUT...

HOW WOULD YOU TRY TO RECOVER FROM THAT?

OH, NO! THE TRAIN'S ABOUT TO LEAVE!

THP THP THP THP

YOU'RE AT THE STATION.

LET'S SAY YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO MEET YOUR FRIEND BUT YOU'RE RUNNING LATE.

BEEEEP

LOOK, SOMETHING LIKE THAT ISN'T GOING TO FOOL ANYBODY. DON'T YOU THINK IT'S RATHER UNNATURAL FOR YOUR ATTITUDE TO SUDDENLY CHANGE AS YOU TRY TO ACT COOL?

YOU SAW RIGHT THROUGH ME! I GUESS MY APPROACH WAS TOO STRAIGHT-FORWARD.

YOU'D PROBABLY STICK YOUR HANDS INSIDE YOUR POCKETS AS WELL, YES? TYPICAL.

AH!

SHPAK

VWSSH

BEEEP

IT'S NO GOOD, HUH? WELL, WHAT WOULD **YOU** DO?

SOMETHING LIKE THAT IS NEVER GOING TO FOOL THE OTHER PASSENGERS.

NNGH

HEH HEH

HEH

I HAVE TO HAND IT TO YOU, BOSS. I'M REALLY IMPRESSED.

YES. IT'S QUITE NATURAL, AND NOT AT ALL EMBARRASSING.

AH! YOU'D PRETEND YOU'RE SEEING OFF A FRIEND!

HEH. STOP, YOU'RE EMBARRASSING ME.

TO BE HONEST, I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT TO MYSELF, "FOR SOMEONE THE SAME AGE AS US, THIS GUY SURE ACTS ALL HIGH AND MIGHTY," OR "HE MAKES NO DAMN SENSE AND JUST DOES WHATEVER HE PLEASES." BUT WHEN IT COMES TO STUFF LIKE THIS, NO ONE ELSE IS IN YOUR LEAGUE!

PSSH

OH, NO!

THP THP THP

AH!

SHPAK

THE THEME OF OUR NEXT SCENARIO IS HOW TO RECOVER FROM FALLING DOWN IN PUBLIC.

YOU WILL?! THANKS, I REALLY APPRECIATE IT!

VERY WELL! TODAY I WILL TEACH YOU A SPECIAL BONUS TECHNIQUE.

GOODBYE! TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!

OW...

AGH!

BWOMP

.....

BWSH

FOR SOME REASON, PEOPLE TEND TO TALK TO THEMSELVES IN SUCH SITUATIONS... BUT THAT JUST MAKES THINGS **MORE** EMBARRASSING.

AAGH! I'M GETTING EMBARRASSED JUST THINKING ABOUT IT!

INDEED.

OH! YEAH, THAT'S PRETTY EMBARRASSING.

THAT MAKES PERFECT SENSE! PLEASE TELL ME WHAT I SHOULD DO!

THAT'S WHY WE SHOULD TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO FORMULATE A STRATEGY NOW.

THE PROBLEM IS THAT WE HUMANS DON'T RESPOND WELL TO ACCIDENTS. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO REMAIN CALM.

BUT WHAT IF YOU'RE ALONE?

THUS, YOUR FRIENDS CAN ADD THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF LEVITY TO KEEP THINGS FROM GETTING TOO EMBARRASSING.

DUDE, WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING.

OW... I TOTALLY FELL!

IF YOU'RE WITH FRIENDS WHEN THAT HAPPENS...

OK, I UNDERSTAND. JUST PLEASE TELL ME!

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF IN AN UNBELIEVABLE AMOUNT OF PAIN, THEN BEING EMBARRASSED IS THE LEAST OF YOUR WORRIES. YOU SHOULD GET TO A HOSPITAL IMMEDIATELY.

VERY WELL. BUT FIRST, LET ME SAY SOMETHING...

BWOMP スターン

OW!

EXACTLY. WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

YEAH, IF I WERE BY MYSELF IT'D BE PRETTY ROUGH.

AH!

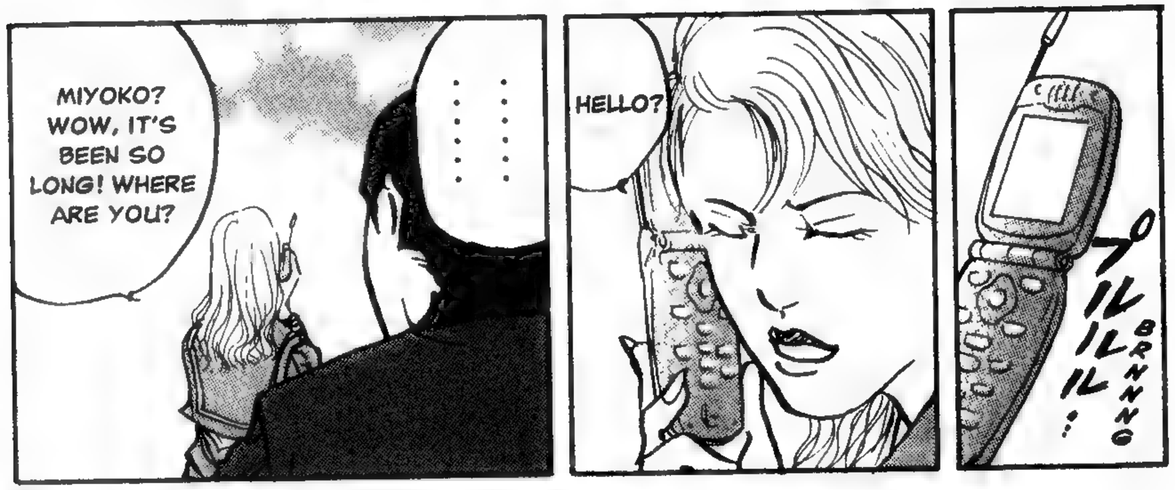
BWOMP スターン

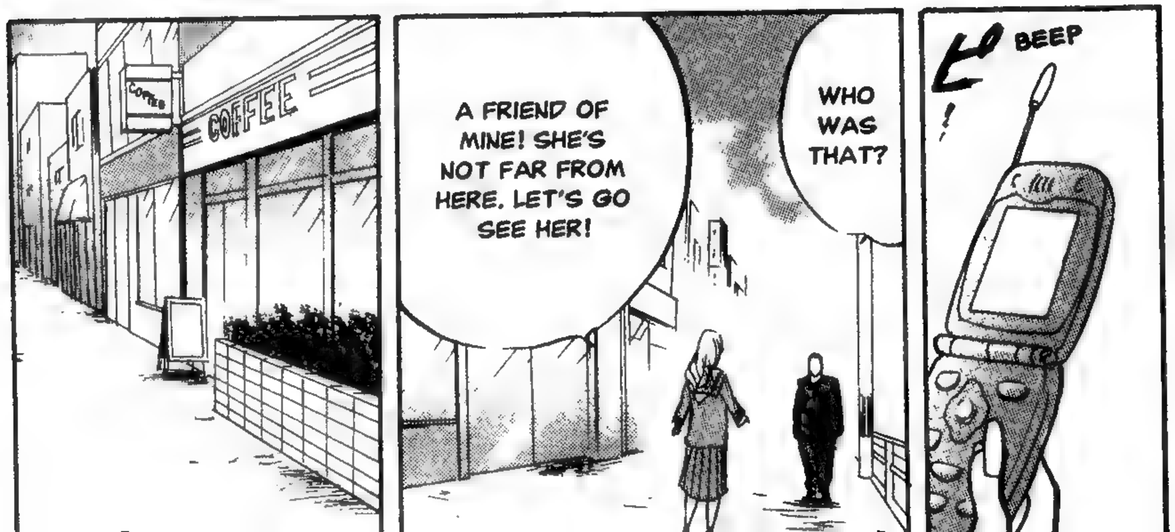
FINE. THIS IS WHAT I WOULD DO.

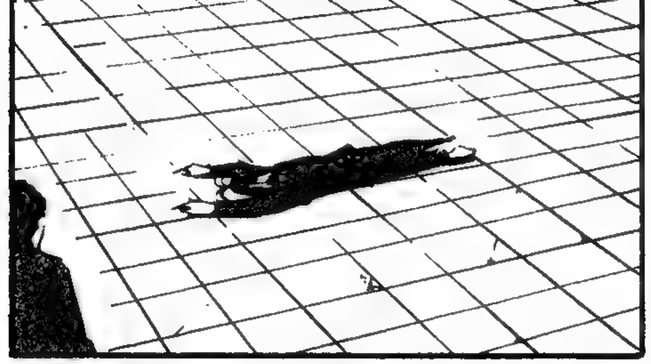
JEEZ, I DON'T BELIEVE IT. WHAT AM I DOING TRIPPING OVER MYSELF?! HEH. WHAT A MORON.

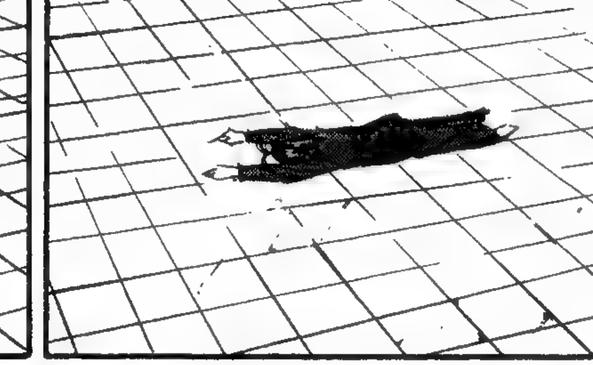
I FELL! THAT REALLY STINGS!

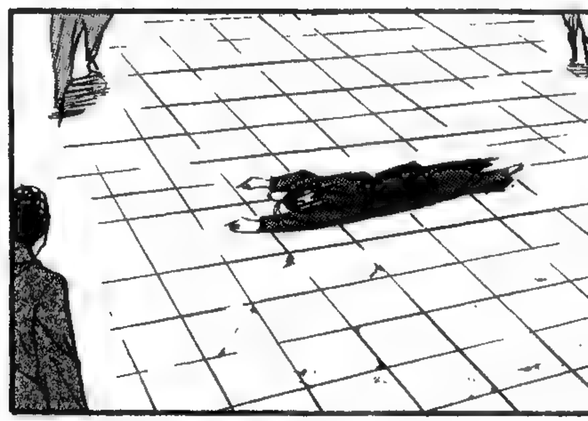
CHAPTER 238: **YOU CAN'T HURRY LOVE**











YOU ROCK.

Y-YOU'RE BOTH GOING?!

WE'LL BE BACK SOON.

UH, SURE.

SORRY, I'M GOING TO RUN TO THE BATHROOM.

.....

.....

HMM. WHAT SHOULD I DO? I GUESS I SHOULD TRY TO START A CONVERSATION.

STILL...

HE'S PROBABLY HOPING I'LL TALK TO HIM.

.....

The two friends

The two guys who don't know a thing about each other

I BET THIS GUY IS THINKING THE SAME THING.

YEAH. THIS IS BAD.

PWFF

HOW'VE YOU BEEN LATELY?

HOW'VE YOU BEEN LATELY?

SO...

THAT WAY I'M SURE TO WIN!

UM...

SKCH

UM...

SKCH

PWFF

OK, GET A GRIP. THIS SITUATION IS **WAY** TOO UNCOMFORTABLE. I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING OR IT'LL JUST KEEP ON GOING.

THIS ISN'T ABOUT WINNING OR LOSING AT ALL!

WAIT, STOP. WHAT AM I THINKING?! THAT'S JUST WRONG.

IF THAT HAPPENED, I'D FEEL LIKE I'D LOST SOMEHOW.

I COULDN'T TAKE THAT!

I'M GOING TO DO IT. I'M GOING TO TALK TO HIM!

THERE ARE PLENTY OF THUGS OUT THERE WHO ARE GOOD GUYS AT HEART.

HI!

SO WHAT WOULD I HAVE TO DO TO WIN?

THIS CONVERSATION IS GOING NOWHERE!

OH, NO!

HE SAID "YES?" HE MIGHT BE A GOOD GUY AFTER ALL!

YES?

UM...

I WOULD'VE BEEN BETTER OFF NOT SAYING ANYTHING AT ALL!

NOW IT'S EVEN MORE UNCOMFORTABLE THAN BEFORE!

THIS IS BAD.

THIS IS PROBABLY GOING TO SOUND A LITTLE WEIRD, BUT...

REALLY? ME, TOO!

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I'VE WANTED TO TRY STARTING UP A CONVERSATION FOR A WHILE NOW, BUT I JUST COULDN'T GET THE WORDS OUT. SORRY.

.....

I'M JUST GOING TO HAVE TO PRESS FORWARD.

IT'S TOO LATE TO CHANGE THINGS NOW.

I GUESS SO! HA HA!

I GUESS DEEP DOWN, WE ALL THINK ALIKE, HUH?

I WAS THINKING THE SAME THING!

I HAD IT IN MY HEAD THAT IF I STARTED TALKING AND YOU JUST IGNORED ME, IT'D BE LIKE I'D **LOST** SOMEHOW.

UH...

UM...

I'LL TRY ASKING IF THERE'S ANYTHING NEW HE'S GOTTEN INTO RECENTLY.

I KNOW! I SHOULD FIND SOMETHING WE HAVE IN COMMON.

IT SURE HAS.

IT'S BEEN HOT LATELY, HASN'T IT?

NOT ONLY DID WE BOTH THINK OF THE SAME QUESTION, I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE AN ANSWER!

DAMMIT! WHAT A STUPID MISTAKE!

YOU LOSE COMPOSURE WHEN THINGS GET DIFFICULT, WORM.

THIS REMINDS ME OF SOMETHING HOKUTO-SAN ONCE SAID.

I SHOULD'VE LIED AND SAID BASEBALL OR SOCCER... ANYTHING!

FOR THOSE WORDS TO COME BACK TO ME AT A TIME LIKE THIS... THAT'S HOKUTO-SAN FOR YOU.

THEY MUST'VE BEEN GONE FOR 20 OR 30 MINUTES ALREADY.

THOSE GIRLS SURE ARE TAKING THEIR TIME.

NO, YOU FIRST.

PLEASE, GO AHEAD!

IS THERE ANYTHING NEW YOU'VE GOTTEN INTO RECENTLY?

NO, PLEASE! PLEASE!

WELL, IF YOU DON'T MIND...

H-HE ASKED ME FIRST!

I DON'T BELIEVE IT! ALL I THOUGHT ABOUT WAS WHAT TO ASK-- I DIDN'T THINK ABOUT HOW I'D ANSWER!

OH.

NO, NOT REALLY.

THERE'S NEVER A SHORTAGE OF THINGS TO TALK ABOUT WHEN I'M WITH KAMIYAMA AND THE OTHERS.

WAIT A MINUTE.

OH, THAT'S RIGHT. WITH ALL THAT TALK, I NEVER GET A CHANCE TO SAY MY NAME.

HM? WHY IS IT BOTHERSOME?

IF ANYTHING, THEY TALK SO MUCH THAT IT'S SORT OF BOTHERSOME.

THAT'S IT! THIS SILENCE HAS OPENED UP THE CHANCE FOR ME TO FINALLY SAY MY NAME!

WE DON'T EVEN KNOW EACH OTHER'S NAMES, DO WE?

YES?

UM...

IN A WAY, IT'S GIVEN ME THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY! I MIGHT NEVER GET A CHANCE LIKE THIS AGAIN!

I DON'T FRICKIN' BELIEVE IT. IT'S LIKE TIME HAS SLOWED TO A CRAWL...MAYBE IT'S PASSING AT A DIFFERENT RATE HERE.

IT'S ONLY BEEN THREE MINUTES!

THAT'S HOW SLOW TIME HAS GOTTEN AROUND HERE.

I FEEL LIKE I COULD RUN A 100-METER DASH IN 10 SECONDS!

I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE. I HAVE TO FIND SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT. IT'S GETTING HARD TO BREATHE!

NOT THAT BLOOD PRESSURE IS ANYTHING WE COULD TALK ABOUT. WE'RE NOT MIDDLE-AGED OFFICE GUYS OR ANYTHING.

MY BLOOD PRESSURE'S PROBABLY GONE UP...

OK. I'M SUZUKI.

PLEASE, YOU FIRST.

THAT WOULD BE GREAT.

WHAT DO YOU SAY WE INTRODUCE OURSELVES?

YES. PLEASE, GO AHEAD.

THAT WOULD MEAN IT'S MY TURN...

OH? THANK YOU VERY MUCH. I'VE NEVER BEEN COMPLIMENTED ON MY NAME BEFORE.

SUZUKI-SAN, IS IT? THAT'S A GREAT NAME.

HUH?

I'M SORRY, DO YOU MIND?

MY NAME IS--

OK.

WHO CARES ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT?!

IT'S JUST, THERE'S A GORILLA EATING LUNCH OVER THERE.

NORMALLY, EVERYONE.

VOLUME 11 ★ THE END

Summer has descended upon Cromartie High, and the students are lining up to take off their clothes...

...to join the school sumo club. Masked Takenouchi becomes the club's rising star, and the Four Great Ones (all five of them!) find themselves impromptu goodwill ambassadors, explaining the finer points of loincloths to a series of foreign guests. You know you're curious.

CROMARTIE HIGH SCHOOL VOL.12

Despite the teaser text, no one's doing anything dirty!*

*** Except for Hayashida, who's having an affair with a married woman. Again.**